

# AUSTRALIA-NEW ZEALAND

## MARCH 3 TO APRIL 1, 2020

You can't say that the Magids do not display *exquisite* judgment when it comes to planning overseas trips. It was in July, 2018, that we first began thinking about a 2020 journey to Australia and New Zealand; and it was in February, 2019, that we decided to travel with Tauck, who offered an itinerary that involved two days each in Melbourne, Cairns, and Sydney (with air travel among the cities), then a flight to Queenstown, NZ, followed by small-ship cruising and sight-seeing on the south and north islands. of that country Their itinerary, a very attractive one, was to began on March 13 and conclude on April 1 of this year. Lee and I decided to add several days prior to the Tauck segment to travel on our own to Perth and the Margaret River region on the west coast of Australia.

How were we to know that Australia, having suffered through three years of record-shattering heat and extreme drought, would be ravaged by wildfires from December, 2019 to the present? How were we to know that one of the stops on Tauck's itinerary would be at White Island, the site of a volcanic eruption on December 9, 2019, that killed 21 tourists and injured 26 more?\* How were we to know that the

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\*It's literally a "once-in-a-lifetime" experience. The only warning (see p. 30) in Tauck's pre-tour booklet is about being sure not to fall out of the Zodiac as it approaches the island.

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coronavirus would spread from China to numerous locations around the world?

I'm writing these introductory paragraphs some weeks before departure, wondering what other misfortunes will befall those two antipodean countries in the coming weeks, not to mention the intrepid travelers who venture there..

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In the following pages, Dear Reader, you will discover that the planned itinerary was trashed by events beyond our control. Writing, now, in late-March/early April, and safely back home in Gig Harbor, we should have paid attention to the words of Robert Burns:

"The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men/Gang aft agley,  
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,/For promis'd joy!"

Writing this document is going to prove more difficult than those in previous years. It's hard to show enthusiasm about an adventure that was cut short. Nevertheless, I'll do my best. Yes I will.

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In this document, the two main characters will sometimes be identified by acronyms. Prof. Dr. Linda Lee Jenny Magid will henceforth be called SWMBO (She Who Must Be Obeyed) and her acquiescent and faithful spouse (*moi!*) will be known as HWO (He Who Obeys).

As on earlier overseas jaunts, HWO has packed enough reading material to last several years: four issues of *The New Yorker* (he has fallen way way behind in reading them), three issues of *Yale Alumni Magazine*, two issues of *The Progressive*, and one of *TIME*; three soft-cover books: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon, *Shards of Memory* by Ruth Praver Jhambvala, and *The Safety of Objects* by A. M. Homes; and several books stored on his Kindle.

The latter requires some explanation. I'll save myself a little typing time by lifting passages from my 2018 and 2019 travelogues:

An unexplained mystery. At one time or another, I "borrowed" several Kindle books from Amazon via Pierce County Library. As with a physical book, the borrowing period for e-books is only three weeks. Amazon is supposed to "snatch" them back electronically from the device. For whatever reason, several books have remained intact on my Kindle for a number of years: Meg Wolitzer's *The Interestings*, Joan Didion's *Blue Nights*, Olen Seinhauer's *All the Old Knives*, Christopher Hitchens's *The Portable Atheist*, Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, and Lynne Murphy's *The Prodigal Tongue*, all of which are (so far) unread. And there are several that I have read but which remain intact: Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Everything*, Jim Lynch's *Border Songs*, Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*, Jasper Fforde's *A Thursday Next Collection* (from which I read the first one), and Daniel Silva's *Gabriel Allon Novels* (from which I read the first of four). Why are these books still on the Kindle? *Wer weiß?*

And, now, to add to this list, in 2019 I downloaded four e-books: Richard Russo's *That Old Cape Magic*, Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods*, Kate Atkinson's *One Good Turn*, and Julia Glass's *The Widower's Tale*. All of these, plus those in the paragraph above, are still on the Kindle.

Emboldened by my unintended "thievery," in 2020 I downloaded three books: *The Friend* by Sigrid Nunez, *Costalegre* by Courtney Maum, and *Big Sky* by Kate Atkinson. And, while in Australia, two more downloadable books became available, so I purloined them as well: *Code Red* by E. J. Dionne, Jr., and *Lady in the Lake* by Laura Lippman. By this time, I can't begin to count how many e-books I've "stolen" from Amazon, but as long as I keep the Kindle in airplane mode there's no way that they can be retrieved. (What's surprising is that I had to disable airplane mode to download this year's books - maybe Amazon wasn't paying attention to the brief window of opportunity that I was giving them.)

Will any of these four new downloads be retrieved at the end of the three weeks? We shall see.

Over the course of the trip, I took some 509 pictures!! Oh, the joy of using a digital camera that does not require purchases of film and the cost of film processing! Only a relatively small number\* have been

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\*By this I mean a mere 422. Well, I did say *relatively* small.

uploaded to my Google Photos account: some of the rejected pictures were poorly focused; others were poorly lit; some were very very very very repetitious; and some showed the two intrepid travelers in a less than flattering light. I've posted the pictures in three separate albums at <https://tinyurl.com/y7sbtg3t> Now if only the all-powerful people at Google will allow me to designate these albums as public viewing!

An illuminating discussion of Australia's geography would be helpful here, but I'm probably not the best qualified person to provide it. Nevertheless, let's give it a shot. Australia is surrounded on all sides by water; thus, it has no borders with other countries. It is shaped like a kidney or (if one wants to avoid mentioning body parts) a kidney bean. Like the lower 48 states of the U.S., it is more or less rectangular in shape. In size ( $2.97 \times 10^6$  sq mi), it's slightly smaller than the contiguous U.S. ( $3.12 \times 10^6$  sq mi). It makes do with three time zones (as compared to our four) and with seven states (as compared to our 48, if one ignores Alaska and Hawaii, something that I enjoy doing). Australia's eastern time zone consists of four states which, from south to north, are Tasmania (Tas), Victoria (Vic), New South Wales (NSW), and Queensland (Qld). Tas is an island off the southern coast of the mainland; Vic, NSW, and Qld are stacked one atop the other. The central time zone consists of two states: South Australia (SA) and Northern Territory (NT); their names reveal which is to the south and which is to the north, right? The western time zone makes do with just one state, appropriately called Western Australia (WA); it is the largest of the seven, encompassing about 1/3 of the total area.



**Daylight Saving Time** in Australia is from October 4 to April 5; in New Zealand it is from September 27 to April 5. Thus, *both* countries will be on **daylight** time during our time there. In the U.S., we change from **standard** to **daylight** time on March 8. The time differentials in the following paragraph will need to be adjusted for the period from March 8 onward.

But not all of Australia goes on daylight time on October 4. WA (Perth, Margaret River) stays on standard time and is **16** hours ahead of PST, but Vic and NSW (Melbourne, Sydney), observing daylight time, are **19** hours ahead of PST; Qld (Cairns), however, is **18** hours ahead. For example, when it is **4:00 pm** in Seattle on a **Thursday**, it is **8:00 am** on **Friday** in Perth and it is **11:00 am** on **Friday** in Melbourne and Sydney. ["But if Australia has only three time zones," I hear you say, "Why isn't the time differential between Perth and either Melbourne or Sydney *two* hours?" Good question! It's because daylight saving time is observed in the NSW and Vic, but not in the west. "Oh."]

One result of all this madness is that when we are scheduled to fly from Auckland to San Francisco on April 1, we leave at just before 8:00 in the evening and arrive **the same day** nearly **eight** hours earlier! This, it seems to me, is tampering with the natural order of things - no wonder the world is being visited by increasingly violent weather systems.

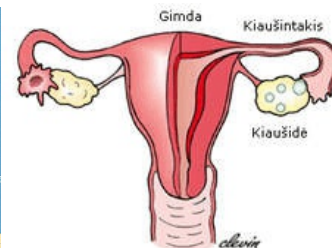
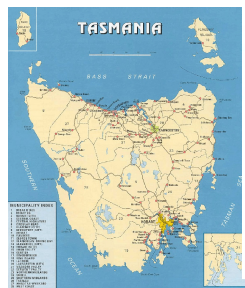
To further complicate things, SA and NT have a weird half-hour time zone. SA observes DST but NT does not. So ... from October 5 to April 6, when DST is (or is not) observed, the time in Tas, Vic, and NSW will be (say) *11:00*; the time in Qld will be *10:00*; the time in SA will be *10:30*; the time in NT will be *9:30*; and the time in WA will be *8:00*.\*

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\*Although I've just described the times in the seven Australian states, this account would not be complete if I failed to mention Eucla, a tiny locality (population less than 100) in WA, right at its border with SA; the time there is *8:45* and it does not observe DST.

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It's a shame that we'll not go to Tasmania on this trip (as we had done in 2014). Not only is it a truly weird place (you can consult the 2014 travelog for details) but it would allow us to continue the description of the shape of geographical entities using human body parts. Tasmania, as I'm sure you'll agree, looks like a human uterus. Of course, the comparison would be a lot better if only King Island and Flinders Island (to the north of the main part of Tasmania) were to droop southward; and if the parts of the uterus had not been labeled in Lithuanian in the diagram that I found.



## TUESDAY, MARCH 3 TO WEDNESDAY, MAY 4

A big decision had to be made before we could go to the airport. Because our flight to Singapore\* leaves

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\*"I thought you were going to Australia - why are you flying to Singapore?" you ask. Well, SWMBO, in consultation with our creative travel agent Stefan Bisciglia, reviewed all of the possible connections between Seattle and Perth. Turns out that the only one that gets us to Perth in "plus one day" is via a direct flight to Singapore followed by a connecting flight to Perth. The first leg is scheduled to take 16 hr 30 min; with a one-hour connecting time, the second leg takes 5 hr 15 min. The result is that we leave Seattle at 9:00 am on March 3 and arrive in Perth at 11:55 pm on March 4.

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at 9:00 am, we had to decide if we wanted to leave home *very* early or go to an airport hotel the night before; and we had to decide how we would get to the airport - leaving a car in their garage for four weeks seemed like a bad idea. After much debate, we decided to leave home *very* early and to hire one of the drivers that other residents at Heron's Key had used. The first one whom I called was no longer living in this area, but the second (recommended by at least three people) was willing to pick us up at 5:00 am. This was Jesse Langford, who (with his mother) operates Beverly's Travel Club. (Beverly is the mother.) When I spoke with him on the phone, I explained that the outer sliding doors to Heron's Key would open but that the inner ones are locked until 7:00. I assured him, however, that we'd be downstairs before 5:00.

So we set the alarm for 3:30 (ugh!). And, after showering, we had to remove items from counter tops to prepare for the arrival of the housekeeper who was scheduled to clean our apartment on March 4, March 18, and April 1. (Lee had already arranged with George that only a minimal cleaning would be needed on March 18 but that this would be an opportunity to take care of other things like blinds, baseboards, etc.) As it turned out, Jesse arrived right on time, but it took 1.5 hours to get to the airport because of a collision that had occurred at 320<sup>th</sup> St. in Federal Way. We checked our bags at the Singapore Airlines\* desk and

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\*Singapore Airlines has the reputation of offering outstanding customer service. I guess that we'll be able to test that, ourselves. But I'm taken aback by the following words from Singapore's web site. They will not provide: "Assistance with feeding of meals; Assistance within the restroom or assistance at the seat with defecation and/or urination functions; Provision of medical services." Noted.

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made it through security (no lines!) very quickly - we were required only to take off our jackets and empty our pockets but not to remove the laptop, other electronics, and liquids from the carry-on. We arrive at the new SEA lounge at 7:00; it is considerably down-market from its predecessor. Because we had had no breakfast, I have coffee, corn flakes, a sweet pastry, and a terrible excuse for a bagel. And, although it had rained during the entire drive to the airport, by 7:00 am the sun was out.

Various web sites (seemingly authoritative and reliable) recommend that one way to forestall jet lag is to set one's watch immediately to the time at destination. I choose not to do this, reasoning that it would have little to do with preventing my getting jet lag and might only be beneficial to whatever beings reside inside the watch.

At 8:30, we board the A350-900. I have window seat 12A; Lee in seat 12F is directly across the aisle. (What happened to seats B, C, D, and E?) All of the flight attendants (the female ones, at least) are young, pretty, and garbed in attractive Asian uniforms, as shown to the right. The one male steward is dressed in a traditional western suit. The doors are closed at 8:55, we are pushed back at 8:58, and we are shortly air-borne. Every airline seems to be using a video that is unconventional. Singapore Airlines is no exception. To the strains of quiet, new-agey music, the scenes change from a Victorian home (perhaps a Geisha house) to a small boat to an alley way where a mural is painted to a boardwalk near a modern building to an empty theater. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25brQSPMORg>



There is lots of storage space around the seat (unlike some airlines - I'm talking about *you*, British Air): two sliding doors for compartments on either side of the TV monitor, a space in the arm rest, lots of space under the seat in front, and so on. The shelf separating me from the window is deep (interfering with my viewing the ground) but it hardly matters as shortly after take-off we are in the clouds. We emerge briefly over (I think) Gig Harbor before going into the clouds again. (One of the suggestions made in the newspaper, to decrease the transmission of virus particles, was to increase the air flow in the jets of air that airplanes have in the control panel above. Singapore makes this impossible, as the air jets are covered by a plastic shield. Oh, well.)

By 9:25, we are flying over the snow-capped Olympic Mountains. At 9:35, we are given warm cloths to cleanse our filthy hands and face. Hot nuts (sounds like a porno flick) are served, followed by "breakfast"

(which is more like a lunch): smoked salmon salad; a bison beef burger with egg, and potato wedges for me, lamb tagine with apricots for Lee (she reports that "the saffron rice and is so-so, and the grilled eggplant is a miss." We both have coffee. I decline dessert, but Lee has a scoop of chocolate-coffee ice cream. I begin reading one of my issues of *The New Yorker* and I do a couple of *New York Times* crossword puzzles.

Then (let the trumpets blare!) for the *first* time in my history of long flights, I decide to watch a movie. In fact, I'll watch *three* movies during the 16.5 hours in the air. And I'll watch a *fourth* on the final leg to Perth. Am I permanently corrupted? Probably. At any rate, the flick that I choose to watch first is *Parasite*, winner of this year's Academy Award for Best Picture. When the award was announced, it was denounced by none other than D. J. Trump who thought it awful that a Korean-made product could have bested the wonderful pictures from Hollywood (like *Jumanji: The Next Level*, *Bad Boys For Life*, and *Enter The Fat Dragon?*). I watched this shortly after finishing "breakfast." Next was *JoJo Rabbit*, which was a free Heron's Key movie on February 28, a date that conflicted with a trip to Seattle for a play and concert. The movie begins at 1:25 pm PST. It's interesting: several of our fellow residents at Heron's Key disliked the movie and didn't understand it. So much for them!

Although there's really nothing to see out the window, we will be in daylight for the full duration of the flight. Following the conclusion of the movie, I read a bit of *The New Yorker*, then shut my eyes at 3:00 in the hope that I might sleep. Not a chance! I open my eyes and it's only 3:45. The good news is that the flight tracker shows us as 7,206 km traveled with 6,126 km to go - so we are over 50% there. That being the case, it's time now to change my watch to Singapore/Perth time (they are the same): March 14, Wednesday, 11:08 am. (Turns out I've done that incorrectly, as I will discover three paragraphs from now.)

At 11:15, there is a meal service. My notes on what I ate are illegible (so what's new?), presumably because I thought that I could refer to the menu that I had pilfered. Well, if I did pilfer it, it's now gone. All that I've got in my notes are two words: leeks, lemon. I assume that the former refers to the main course, the latter to the dessert. Perhaps I can find the menu online? Nah. But WAIT - I actually had the foresight to take a picture of the menu with my phone. I can now report that it consisted of Roasted Baby Leek and Soft Egg Salad; and Seared Chicken with Lemon Vinaigrette. On the menu, two single malts were listed: Macallan and Talisker. Alas, they had only the former, so I "choose" it. According to her journal, Lee has "a poached egg and leek salad, followed by pork in vinegar sauce, with rice, carrots, and baby bok choy. Dessert is panna cotta with berry coulis and granola, followed by candies to go with the coffee - yum!"

So I watch another movie: *Knives Out* which was most enjoyable, especially experiencing Daniel Craig with a deep southern accent. It ends at 2:00. I start reading *The Friend*, one of my Kindle downloads. And even though I've lost track of what day it is and whether it's morning, afternoon, or evening I make an executive decision and take my morning pills.

At 4:30, I come to the startling realization that I must have re-set my watch incorrectly. My watch suggests that we're an hour away from landing in Singapore but the Flight Tracker says otherwise - in fact, it informs me that the time is really 3:30. I'm convinced that I was right and the plane's computer is wrong, but given the fact that we're not descending toward an airport I concede defeat and re-set my watch. And now, at the new improved time of 5:10, we do begin our descent. As we approach the city-state, I'm amazed at the huge number of container ships and tankers at anchor outside the port. I tried counting them, but gave up. My guess is that they numbered over 100.

The plane touches down at 5:35 (five minutes ahead of schedule) and we are at the terminal just seven minutes later. Not knowing how large the airport is nor how much walking we'll need to do to get to our next flight (scheduled to leave for Perth at 6:40), SWMBO has made arrangements for a wheelchair for HWO. I feel silly being wheeled through the terminal but am also thankful because of my recently-developed difficulty in walking long distances without resting. SWMBO does not have an easy time of it,



as she is struggling to keep up with the energetic wheelchair-pusher while manipulating two carry-ons; at least they're on wheels. With the heat (31°C) and humidity, she is drenched at the end of the "journey."

We have landed at Terminal 2 and we need to get to Terminal 3 via their Skytrain. It is a beautiful, well-lighted airport with things not often seen in such a facility. For example, there is a rain forest with a waterfall. We do not have to go through passport control, but we do need to stop at security to have our carry-ons inspected. Unlike the minimal procedure at Seatac, I'm required to remove the laptop from my briefcase and paraphernalia from my pockets. Apparently, the full-body scanner has detected something in my lower left pants leg, but a hand-pat and wand reveal that it's only my sock. Well, I could have told them that. One advantage of the wheelchair is that we are able to reach security via a wide-open lane. We reach the gate for our Perth flight and are onboard at 6:15. Whew!



The plane is a 787 Boeing Dreamliner, not as spacious or well-appointed as was the Airbus A-350. Am I allowed to say that? After all, Boeing is one of the major employers in the Seattle area and is presently enduring severe difficulties as all of its 737Max planes have been grounded since March, 2019, after the second fatal crash in just five months. On the one hand, this is the only plane I've flown that has a shoulder harness attached to the lap belt that is standard on others, although the "female" end into which the "male" is inserted is difficult to reach. On the other hand, there is precious little storage space for books, magazines, etc. (During the flight, I do discover a small compartment above the back of my seat.)

The plane is pushed back at 6:37 and is air-borne at 6:46. The safety film is the same one that we saw on the previous Singapore flight. At 7:30, we are served a nice dinner, featuring an appetizer of Asian barbecued beef on skewers and a main course of roasted chicken, vegetables, and potatoes. Lee has shrimp on julienned zucchini with cherry tomatoes. As on the previous flight, however, there is no Talisker single malt. At 9:55, I watch my fourth movie of the day: *The Good Liar*. Following the movie, I read some more of *The Friend* and I work some crossword puzzles. The plane lands at 11:31 and reaches the terminal at 11:38, some fifteen minutes ahead of schedule.

Once again, SWMBO has ordered a wheelchair for me. The pusher is a woman from Singapore Airlines (not an airport employee). We go through immigration and customs (both gratifyingly quick with extremely short lines) and to baggage claim where we meet the Abercrombie & Kent agent who will drive us to the hotel. Although the distances are short, the wheelchair pusher insists on wheeling me out of the airport and right to the SUV that we'll board. And, then, she refuses Lee's attempts to give her a tip.

It's about a 30-minute drive on a mild, cloudless evening to our hotel with its funny name: COMO The Treasury. COMO Hotels and Resorts, it turns out, is a large chain of luxury accommodations across the world, but largely focused on Southeast Asia (Thailand, Bhutan, Indonesia, Vietnam). According to the hotel's web site <https://www.comohotels.com/en/thetreasury>, "COMO The Treasury is a 48-room contemporary luxury hotel in Perth's newly revitalised historic heart. Occupying state buildings dating from the mid 19th-century ..."



The reception area is very un-hotel-like. In fact, there's no obvious counter at which to register. But in a large living room with many comfortable chairs, there is a small desk - and a man shows up to check us in. In this photo, the woman at the far right is sitting at that desk. Although it's now well past midnight, the agent seems remarkably chipper. (As for the two travelers, not so much.) He shows us to our room on Level 2 and it is



spectacular: very large, elegant furniture, modern bathroom with separate shower and tub. We'll learn when daylight comes that there is an interesting view from our room. We manage to unpack, set the alarm for 8:30, and collapse into bed at about 2:00.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 5

I awake at 4:00, but in contrast to recent overseas trips I manage to fall asleep again. I awaken at 8:15, just ahead of the alarm. The shower is a bit of a challenge. There are three choices: a hand-held wand, an overhead rain shower, and a conventional shower head fixed to the wall. Each has its own controls. I opt for the conventional shower head, but discover (too late) that it directs its water stream right at the opening crack between the permanent glass door and the movable one. The result: water floods the bathroom floor (or the bath rug, at any rate). Tomorrow, I'll use the hand-held wand and will direct it away from the glass doors while waiting for hot water to come through.

As I get dressed, I look through the hotel's information book. COMO is very proud of its "wellness programs" at all of their locations. I was delighted to read that their elegant spa offers (for an elegant amount of money) all sorts of massages, each of which sounds more intriguing than another. For example, there is the "Shambhala\* Massage" (from which I know nothing!). There are also the "Indian

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\*I checked online to see what Shambhala means. Here's what Wikipedia offers: "In Tibetan Buddhist and Indian Buddhist traditions, Shambhala is a mythical kingdom hidden somewhere in Inner Asia. ... Whatever its historical basis, Shambhala gradually came to be seen as a Buddhist Pure Land, a fabulous kingdom whose reality is visionary or spiritual as much as physical or geographic." Now you know.

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Head Massage" (sounds painful), the "Prenatal Massage" (not for us, I suppose), and the "Deep Tissue Massage." Each of these costs about 170 AUD. (For your information, 1.0 AUD is about 65¢.) You can read about all of these, if you are interested, at the COMO website: <https://tinyurl.com/rpfqut6> Also on offer are "body therapy and skin detoxification" along with "facial care" and "beauty care." I think I'll pass.

The hotel is situated on a large plaza, across which are St Georges Cathedral (the principal Anglican church of the city), town hall, and the city library. Across St Georges Terrace are the elegant Stirling Gardens, featuring stone sculptures of kangaroos at rest and play. We'll take pictures of all of these, eventually, but for now we need breakfast.

The hotel has an elegant (and expensive and to my sensibility "precious") restaurant called "Wildflower" and a modest restaurant, also open for breakfast, called "Post." (Its name reflects its location in the old General Post Office in the State Buildings.) The cost of breakfast is included in the room price. We take the elevator down one-and-a-half levels (don't ask) and follow signs to *Post*. Actually signs are not needed because all that we need to do is follow the noise which emanates from two sources: a take-away coffee bar and a very large atrium where people can go to drink their coffee and surf the internet. Fortunately, the noise does not follow us through the doors into *Post*. What *does* follow us is that same damned techno music that we now hear EVERYWHERE: in a hotel in Barcelona; in an inn in Ironbridge, UK; at the Sydney hotel when we visited Australia in 2014; and numerous other places. In earlier travels I tried to use words\* to describe the types of tones and instruments and rhythms that are

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\*Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, in a 1964 decision, said that while he might not be able to define hard-core pornography, "I know it when I see it." My thought, exactly, about hearing techno.

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involved, but that's a hopeless exercise. The one saving feature is that in *Post* the techno music is interspersed with excellent cool jazz.

The service in *Post* is elegant, something that one doesn't often expect at. Before we even order, we are

offered a "health drink" made fresh from various juices. Today's (beetroot, apple, and pineapple) tasted good, tomorrow's not so much. The menu is essentially only hot items. Today I will have three eggs (two is not given as an option) with bacon, mushrooms, and beans. (The menu lists it as "Baldivis free range eggs (any style) on toasted sourdough.") The mushrooms and beans have a seasoning that was not necessary at all. We also have coffee. Any hope of finding a simple filter coffee or drip coffee here (or at nearly every place we visit during the weeks) is gone. Instead, the closest we can get is a "long black" which resembles an Americano\* but is less bitter. (Tomorrow I'll order buttermilk pancakes\*\* with bacon;

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\*According to a helpful web site, "A long black is made by pouring an espresso or ristretto over hot water. A long black is similar to an Americano, which is made by adding hot water to the espresso shot; but a long black retains the crema and is less voluminous, therefore more strongly flavoured. Water first, espresso second is the important order to brew long black —reversing the steps will destroy the crema from the espresso shot and make an Americano.

\*\*More precisely, according to the menu, "Lemon and blueberry buttermilk pancakes with macerated strawberries and vanilla cream"

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and will alternate the two meals for a total of five days.)

After breakfast, we stop at the reception desk to learn where the nearest ATM is located and to get a local street map. I also ask where the room's Do Not Disturb sign is. Turns out, there is none. There is a tassel that can be hung on the door to signify Do Not Disturb, but no accompanying thing to indicate Please Make Up This Room.

It is a warmish day (I'd guess high 70s/low 80s - that's Fahrenheit, my friends) and very humid as we exit the hotel and walk to the ATM located on the nearby Hay Street Mall (pedestrian only). This outdoor "mall" is lined with downscale shops of all sorts. Perpendicular to Hay Street is London Court, with its faux British coat of arms and faux old English sign names. It, too, has downscale shops.

We then walk to Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA to those in the know). Located only four blocks north of Hay Street, it looked like a short walk. But the two American wusses, having been spoiled by the cool and non-humid air of Western Washington, are much distressed by the time they arrive. Google Maps estimates it as a 10-minute walk. I beg to differ. Although closed right now because of the coronavirus, the web site does feature pictures of some of the collection:  
<https://artgallery.wa.gov.au/whats-on> and <https://artgallery.wa.gov.au/discover>

It is a beautifully organized building with a very pleasing and varied collection. On the ground floor are rooms dedicated to WA Journey, Modern (1920-1969), and Contemporary (1970-today). On Level One (which, of course, means floor 2) the rooms are Design Gallery, Six Seasons, and Historical (1700-1919). What is particularly copacetic (I haven't used that word in years!) is that each room is laid out with art on an outer concentric wall; and when one is finished there, then there is an inner concentric wall with additional art. In other museums, it's possible to think you've seen everything but haven't; here, you can't miss a thing. Although most of the art is from Western Australia (some of it indigenous), there are occasional works by famous artists like sculptors Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, and Auguste Rodin. We take many pictures of the pieces we find most appealing.

What also distinguishes this place is the number of guards or docents who wander through the galleries with the patrons. There is one man who takes a liking to us (or perhaps took pity on us) who keeps re-appearing to point out specific pieces of art that we should not miss. We run into him in several of the galleries. He explains that they're required to keep moving (never sit down) and to go to a different gallery every thirty minutes. What a workout!

Having arrived at AGWA at 1:00, we're finally ready to leave at 2:45, but not before stopping at the museum's café for a soft drink and a pastry. SWMBO, bless her soul, found a route back to the hotel that



avoided city streets (and the hot sun) by moving from one covered mall or arcade to another. Now I know why I keep her around. We are back in our hotel room at 3:45.

We decide to have dinner at *Post*. (The next few days, we'll venture outside to other restaurants.) "No reservations required at *Post*," we are told at the hotel's reception desk. Ha! When we get to *Post*, we discover that it is reserved for a private party. Because we'd really like to avoid the outdoors, we walk on the same level as *Post* to another restaurant that is in the building but not owned by COMO. It's called *Petition* (presumably because it's where the law courts were located). I can't locate their menu online - all that I can find are Instagram photos that customers have posted. So I'll have to go with my brief notes: we share a paté de foie gras; Lee has prawns and pasta and I have charcuterie.

Back in our room at night, I try to come to grips with my relatively new Hewlett-Packard laptop. The touch screen is extraordinarily sensitive, despite my best efforts to reduce it. Thus, everything seems to take twice as long as it should because of inadvertent opening/closing of programs. Oh, well, maybe by the end of the trip the computer and I will find a happy meeting place. Because the Magids are both tired, we go to bed at 9:15.

## FRIDAY, MARCH 6

I awake at 4:30, but at least that's still seven hours of sleep. I read *The Friend* (which I'm liking more and more, the deeper into it I go) until *Post* opens for breakfast. As stated earlier, I switch from eggs to pancakes; ordinarily, I find pancakes too heavy for early morning, but these are light. The health juice is an ugly green creamy looking affair with a cucumber slice; at the risk of insulting the staff, I reject it in favor of orange juice. At Lee's suggestion, I also order the seasonal fruit (pineapple, grapes, cantaloupe, strawberries, watermelon, raspberries) which is excellent. At 7:15, we return to our room to read for a while as we await the arrival of the Abercrombie & Kent guide whom we've hired for the day and who will arrive at 9:00.

In fact, she's a few minutes early. Her name is Shannon. She has planned a full day for us, much of it based on suggestions from Lee. I warn her that, from time to time, I'll ask to rest if my legs feel like they're going to give out. The day is sunny, pleasant, not too warm - a good thing, as our touring will all be out-of-doors. We drive, first, to Kings Park, a relatively short distance from the hotel, and head to the Botanic Garden.\* As much as I usually dislike such things, this one is interesting in that it has not only

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\*According to Wikipedia, "The botanic garden is an 18 hectares (44 acres) site within the park. Currently known as the Western Australian Botanic Garden it has a collection of 2000 species of Western Australian flora on display."

flowers and shrubs from various regions of Australia but also unusual trees, some of them of considerable size. We stop at the State War Memorial, erected in 1954 for Australians who lost their lives during World War II. The park also provides excellent views of the city down below. Of particular interest is an old boab tree that had been damaged by loggers. According to the park's web site:

"The story of the Giant Boab 'Gija Jumulu' captured world-wide media coverage during July 2008 as it journeyed over 3,200 kilometres, from Warmun in WA's Kimberley region, to Kings Park in Perth. Never before had a mature tree of this nature been transported across such a distance on land. The iconic tree, estimated to be 750 years old, weighs 36 tonnes and stretches 14 metres high and eight metres wide (branch span). Its trunk measures 2.5 metres in diameter."



We leave the park at 10:15 and head for the Clock Tower also called the Bell Tower. On the ground level is a large clock whose mechanism needs to be wound each day. A young woman, proving that she's got

the muscles to do it, winds the clock by grabbing a huge winch, fitting it to one of the cogs, and turning it (with great effort). Then she goes to a second cog and then a third. What a workout! She tells us how heavy the weights are that drive the pendulum, but I fail to write them down nor can I find the information online. We then take an elevator to Level 3 where a young man, a certified bellringer, explains the operation of the bells. There are 18 of them, 12 of which came from St. Martin-in-the-Fields (in London). [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swan\\_Bells](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swan_Bells) The bells vary in weight from 250 kg to nearly 1500 kg and are tuned to different notes. Those from England were cast in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; the six others are from 1988. We are first in a room below the bells where we find the cords the need to be pulled. By pulling them in specific sequences, melodies can be played. The guide shows us the "sheet music" that a team of 18 ringers follow when playing classic tunes. Each of us is given the opportunity to pull a cord, being careful not to be carried aloft when the cord retracts; and for our efforts, we are each given a certificate certifying that we have "chimed a bell at The Bell Tower, Perth." We then ascend one level to marvel at the size of the bells, separated from us (on a catwalk) by plexiglass. Some of them are upside down, some right-side up, but I forget the reason. The bells are rung on the hour and the half-hour, starting at 10:30 am and ending at 2:30 pm six days a week, but never on Sunday.



When we leave the clock/bell tower at 11:00, I suddenly come to the realization that I had screwed up when setting my camera for Perth time. All of the dates and times on the pictures, thus far, will be wrong. I correct the error so that the dates will start with March 6 and the times after noon. Leaving the clock tower, we walk toward the river and take a break for coffee at an outdoor café.

Then, we're our way again, this time (some 12 km) to Cottesloe Beach. Along the way, while we're still alongside the Swan River, we pass the iconic Blue Boat House at the end of a short jetty. Shannon says that for many tourists (including some of those whom she is driving) this is a **must stop** - they need to take a picture of it and post it to Instagram for their friends and family. That there is absolutely no parking nearby and the closest lot is about a half-mile away does not dissuade them.

Cottesloe Beach, where we arrive at about 12:30, is on the Indian Ocean shore, more or less due west from Perth. The neighborhood leading to the beach is clearly the "high-rent" district, judging from the size of the homes. The beach, a wide white expanse of sand, well-populated with sunbathers and swimmers, is most notable for the imaginative sculptures along its considerable length. Each year, artists submit their ideas to a jury which approves the best of them. As we walk along, we note that most of the art is on the sand, some is in the water, and some is on the grass that separates the beach from the roadway. A few of the currently displayed art works can be viewed here: <https://sculpturebythesea.com/cottesloe/>



We stroll along the beach for about a half-hour, following which Shannon drives us a short distance to *The Blue Duck*, a seaside restaurant where we have a reservation for 1:00 and a pre-paid three-course meal. Lee indulges in the Thai salad with fried squid but I'm not hungry. I skip the main course but order the pavlova\* and a diet drink. Said pavlova turns out to be a calorie bomb - too much! I eat only half. Lee

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\*Ignorant that I am about such things, I find the following at one of many web sites: "Pavlova is a dessert popular in New Zealand and Australia. It's not as common here in the states ... A texture freak's dream come true, pavlova is made from egg whites that are slowly baked in a relatively cool oven. The egg whites take on a chewy-crisp texture on top, a soft marshmallow texture inside, and a crunchy crisp texture around the edges. That's three completely different textures in one single bite. The crunchy edges are just like meringue cookies. Pavlova loves to be dressed up with assorted toppings, mainly fresh whipped cream and piles of fresh fruit."

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also orders one, but gives up before finishing. (This dessert is part of the three-course set menu.) During this time, Shannon has disappeared to attend to the car (whatever that means). We reconnoiter at 2:00.

It's a short drive, about 8 km, to the port city of Fremantle, population about 26,000 where our destination is the Maritime Museum. We arrive at 2:20. We are met by a guide, Julia, who whisks us through the large building, determined (as she announces several times) to conclude her tour in 30 minutes. And so she does. The museum is a true find for those who sail, but for us landlubbers it's merely very nice. One of the highlights is the yacht *Australia II* that won the America's cup in 1988. According to Wikipedia:



The trophy was held by the NYYC from 1857 (when the syndicate that won the cup donated the trophy to the club) until 1983. The NYYC successfully defended the trophy twenty-four times in a row before being defeated by the Royal Perth Yacht Club, represented by the yacht *Australia II*. The NYYC's reign was the longest winning streak (in terms of date) in the history of all sports.

Other notable vessels are *Parry Endeavour* that Jon Sanders sailed three times around the globe; an old wooden boat that was seized by authorities because it was carrying drugs; and scale models of ships from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and earlier. At 3:45, we drive to nearby Bathers Beach to gawk at the sculptures for its 2020 refereed exhibits: <https://tinyurl.com/vrrx9ck> Our final stop is at Fremantle's market. By this time, my legs are saying "no more" so I sit on an outdoor bench while Lee and Shannon explore the Fremantle Markets, a collection of stores and stalls offering everything from crafts to fresh produce. They finish at 4:30 and Shannon has us back at the hotel by 5:15.

Last night, we planned to eat at the hotel's restaurant, *Post*, but were denied because it was reserved for a private party. Tonight, we actually made a reservation this morning before beginning our tour. I start with "La Stella buffalo mozzarella, Manjimup figs, aged balsamic" followed by "Angel hair pasta, Shark Bay crab, tomato sugo, parsley." No, my memory is not that good - I found an online menu from which I copied the description. Lee "eats about 20% of a massive cabbage, kale, pear, and mustard vinaigrette salad." She also has the angel hair pasta. I drink a Pinot Grigio, Lee an "average rosé." Following dinner, we read, surf the internet, and (exhausted) are in bed by 9:30.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 7

I had acid reflux last night for the first time on our trip. I had hoped that Australian food would immunize me against that. I awake at 4:30 but manage to fall asleep whereupon the alarm wakes us at 6:30 - nine blessed hours of sleep. The morning is overcast - maybe it won't be as hot as yesterday, but probably just as humid. Breakfast at *Post* is orange juice, pancakes, long black coffee. As was true yesterday, our ears are assaulted by the damned techno music, broken up (occasionally) by pleasant light jazz.

### UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATION ABOUT AUSTRALIANS (but that doesn't make them any less true):

- In this restaurant, as in the others we've visited, the accents of our fellow diners are Australian. That's no surprise. The voices, however, are VERY LOUD! Question: are they really very loud or do I perceive them as such because of their accents?
- On the drive from Perth's airport to the hotel two days ago, I asked the driver if he knew that he was driving on the wrong side of the road. He laughed at me, the ingrate! Then I told him that I didn't have an accent, he did. He laughed again.
- Sad to say, but very few Australians look like Hugh Jackman, Eric Bana, Cate Blanchett, or Nicole Kidman - in fact, they tend not to be a very good-looking people. Perhaps it's because they're all descended from convicts? Or maybe it comes from living south of the Equator or because of the intense sunlight\* (even in winter) and strong UV radiation levels? Or maybe it's because they

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\*Not a fun fact: Australians have the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world. For this reason, school kids not only all wear sun hats, even in the winter, but these hats have a protective flap to prevent the rear of the neck from burning.

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bequeathed all of their cuteness to koalas and kangaroos?

- The method of handling cutlery at the dinner table looks strange to us, but it's the same as what one sees in England. The fork is held in the left hand, "upside-down" (i.e., with the convex surface up). The knife is held in the right hand. One function of the knife (the one that we're accustomed to) is to cut up meat or vegetables or whatever. But then ... the piece of meat or whatever is speared on the fork and, with the fork still held "upside-down" the knife is used to push items onto the upper surface: mashed potatoes, vegetables, sauce or gravy, whatever - and when the fork is holding as much as it can, the user then raises it to his/her/its mouth without spilling anything. Amazing!
- I recall remarking, in an earlier travelog, at the number of dogs that we saw, both in cities and towns and in the countryside in England. In contrast, dogs are very rare, at least in Western Australia. About the only dogs that we see are service dogs. This does not reflect well on the good people of Australia.

### **CHARITABLE: OBSERVATION ABOUT AUSTRALIANS**

- One very good thing about Australians, at least from our point of view: they don't hate Americans! You might recall that shortly after the attacks of 9-11, most of the world had a very warm view of the U.S. and showed great sympathy for our horrendous loss. That good will, alas, was squandered by President W and his hench-persons Cheney and Rumsfeld when they invaded Iraq. Maybe it's because Australia is so far away, but the U.S.'s disastrous adventure in Iraq did not sour their population's view of us.
- For pedestrians, the walk signs at intersections last a very long time, long enough that it's not necessary to begin walking as soon as signaled and to race across the street. The walk signal is accompanied by an audible gong that sounds for the full time.
- Drivers seem to be very courteous, although we've not yet been behind the wheel of a car yet and perhaps are forming an opinion prematurely. They are patient when pedestrians are crossing in front of them, they defer to other drivers who want to shift lanes, and they pay attention to the speed limits, more or less.

Before leaving the hotel, we ask the concierge to make a reservation for us this evening at *Matilda Bay*, a restaurant that the hotel staff strongly recommends. We decide to delay going to *Tra Vinh*, a Vietnamese restaurant, until tomorrow. At 9:15, we walk to the ATM that we had visited the other day and then to the Hertz office to pick up our rental car. It's located on Murray Street, just one block north of the hotel and three long blocks west of the Hay Street Mall. Google maps estimates a time of 17 minutes to walk there. We don't arrive until about 9:35, mainly because HWO stopped twice to rest and to get relief from the heat.

Well! On the Google map, the distance looks short but the programmers didn't take into account the heat and very high humidity that render the sissies from Washington State two pools of sweat when we arrive at the office. I can't stop dripping as I stand in the (barely air-conditioned) office while Lee fills out most of the paper work. The car that we are offered is a Holden Calais V Tourer which proves to be a small (and quite drivable) SUV. And, as we will discover when we drive to Margaret River three days from now, the car has ample room for both large suitcases and the smaller ones.



Our destinations, today, are the Swan Valley vineyards, of which there are a great many. Shannon gave us a map, yesterday, along with recommendations of which ones to stop at. According to Google Maps, the wineries are about 30 km distant, with an estimated driving time of 35 minutes.\* Lee begins the drive

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\*Another "wonderful" Google estimate. Having left Hertz at about 10:00. we arrive at our first winery at



11:15. Is 75 minutes close enough to the estimated 35 minutes to call them about equal?

and I navigate. Even though we're familiar with the area around the car rental office, we encounter one-way streets (going the wrong way, of course) and pedestrian-only areas (for which we are not qualified) but finally we break out of the center city. The road is not attractive (strip malls, car dealers, modest apartment buildings) but finally we pass the Swan Valley Visitors Centre and make our way to Great Northern Highway. Our first stop is at John Kosovich, a family-run winery with the younger generation still in charge: <https://www.swanvalley.com.au/Business-Directory/John-Kosovich-Wines> The man we meet is, I assume, Arch Kosovich\* who is the grandson of the founder. We chat about Croatia, our

\*Winemaker, Arch Kosovich is a third-generation winemaker, following on from his father John and grandfather Jack, who emigrated from Croatia shortly before the outbreak of World War I. Jack and his brothers established the winery in 1922, and the atmospheric underground cellar and tasting area was dug by them with help from neighbours and their trusty draft horses.

visit to the country five years ago, and our town (Gig Harbor) which was founded by Croatian fishermen, the descendents of whom still operate the commercial fishing fleet. He seems uninterested in this. He is wearing a Jimi Hendrix shirt, prompting me to say "I didn't know that Jimi Hendrix was Croatian." Lee samples a couple of his wines and expresses deep approval for a Cabernet Malbec. Because this winery does not ship, she buys a bottle, which is consumed over the next few days.

When we leave, I drive for a while: the road is a divided highway, one or two lanes in each direction, and not heavily traveled. Probably I can drive the car without going the wrong way or crashing into a tree or other obstacle. And our destination is only 5 km south. So we go to Mondo Nougat

<https://mondonougat.com.au/> a truly eclectic store with vast quantities of nougats in all sorts of varieties; it is also a café (I wonder if the menu features anything that is not nougat-based.) It was founded in 1989 by Italian immigrants, which explains some of the strange vehicles that are inside the store. We purchase an assortment of nougats for later consumption.



We then backtrack to the north, about 2 km, to The House of Honey, where we arrive at 12:10. (All of these establishments are on the Great Northern Highway.) <https://www.thehouseofhoney.com.au/> It's amazing (to me at least) how many different varieties of honey are for sale. The store is huge and, inveterate shopper that she is, SWMBO examines bottles and jars and carafes throughout. She finally buys a couple of items as gifts for friends back home.

Silly me, I thought that we were going to wine country. Our next stop is Whistler Chocolate Company <https://www.whistlers.com.au/> 4 km to the south on the same highway. There are aisles and aisles and aisles of every variety of chocolate that one can imagine. According to their web site. "Whistler's Chocolate Co has been producing handmade chocolate for over forty years and have an extensive range for you to choose from. Think Rocky Road, Coconut Rough, Chocolate Liquorice, Chocolate Snakes, Handmade Honeycomb and Peanut Brittles. There is something for everyone." Lee buys some of this and some of that, mostly as gifts but also for us should we have starvation attacks at night during this trip. I ask if they have *nonpareils*, but the name means nothing to the clerk. But when I describe them, she leads us to what she calls *freckles*. When we're in Melbourne, several days from now, we'll learn that they are also called *speckles*. Curious about where "our" name for them originates, I consult Wikipedia and learn:



Görlitz, Germany was the birthplace of the German version of nonpareils, popularly known in Germany as Liebesperlen (German: love pearls). Invented by confectioner Rudolf Hoinkis



(1876–1944), the name derives from a conversation Hoinkis had with his wife, proclaiming he loved her like these "pearls," the nonpareil. Unsure of what to call the treat he invented, his wife suggested calling them love pearls, and the name stuck.

In the café associated with the store, we stop for a coffee and carrot cake, a large slice that we share. Having arrived here at 12:30, we finally set on our way at 1:15. But are we finished visiting interesting stores on the Great Northern Highway? We are not!

Now we are heading to the enormous Mandoon Estate <https://mandoonestate.com.au/> located 2 km south on the Great Northern Highway and then 2 km west on Reid Road. And here is where the crowds are! The parking lot, itself enormous, is nearly full - we have a long walk from where we park to the buildings that make up the estate. It consists of vineyards, a restaurant, a winery, a brewery, a luxury hotel, a huge outdoor eating area (called, for some strange reason, THE LLAWN), and an art gallery called Linton & Kay. Featuring some excellent paintings by local artists, the biggest surprise is several rooms devoted to original drawings by Dr. Seuss:

<https://www.lintonandkay.com.au/exhibitions/mandoon-estate-mixed-exhibition/> Also featured is a poem by Theodore Geisel, written one morning when he was shaving: "Mrs. Van Bleck of the Newport Van Blecks / is so goddamn rich, she has gold-plated sex / whereas Miggles and Mitzie and Bitzie and Sue / have the commonplace thing, and it just has to do."



It is a hot day, so after strolling through the gallery's rooms, we sit on the back porch to enjoy the shade and the bit of a breeze while watching two staff members set up the decorations for a 2:00 lawn wedding. Following this busy day of store-hopping, we return to our hotel at 2:45 where we can cool off, read, surf the internet, etc. But are we finished with weddings for the day? No sir! At the church right outside our window there is a large wedding with many guests plus the bride and groom pouring out of the church doors and into the courtyard. Photographers scurry about, setting up pictures, posing people for others. As the crowd expands, they begin to occupy those areas of the courtyard where cars arrive to deliver people to the hotel.

We have a dinner reservation at 5:30 at *Matilda Bay Restaurant*, some six km away. Because it will be after dark when we're finished eating, we choose to take a taxi. Owing to the scrum of wedding guests impeding approach to the hotel, the driver has to back out of the long driveway and into the street so as to avoid hitting people. Had I been the driver, I would have used my vehicle to herd people back toward the church. It's a very pleasant drive, using the same road that we had driven yesterday along the river (and past the Blue Boat House) to the restaurant <https://www.matildabayrestaurant.com.au/>

The restaurant is in a beautiful setting, right on Swan River's Matilda Bay. The tables are arranged on two levels such that every diner has a view of the water, just as is true in the many Anthony's restaurants in the Seattle area. The large sliding windows are all open, thus allowing a pleasant evening breeze to sweep in. While eating, we get to watch the arrival of small boats to the marina and, also, a family (father, teenage son, and younger son) getting their kayaks into the water, disappearing from sight, then re-appearing as the sun begins to set. (We are also treated to the elegant meandering of a pair of black swans.) Alas, the peace and quiet of the restaurant is interrupted by a large wedding party, our third of the day, who are seated at a nearby table. Like all of the restaurants we've visited, this one was noisy even before the wedding revelers arrived.) The food is delicious.



I start with "Seafood ravioli, grilled prawns, cherry tomato, green olive, caper salsa" followed by "Crisp skinned barramundi, Shark Bay scampi and zucchini flower cannelloni, Nantua sauce." Lee has "Shark bay scallop, toasted hazelnuts, apple and watercress, hazelnut vinaigrette" and, as her main,

"Confit duck leg, sticky chilli caramel, duck bao, fresh herb salad, roasted cashews." (No, I didn't remember the food in such detail; rather I copped it from an internet posting of the menu.) In her journal, she declares this meal "the best eaten in many months," thus dissing my home cooking and hers, as well as the meals at Syren's Grille and at area restaurants.

We call for a taxi to return us to the hotel. And following this busy day of tourism and eating, we collapse into bed at 9:45.

## SUNDAY, MARCH 8

I awaken at 3:15 but manage to fall back asleep. However, at 5:30, there's no more sleep so I get up to read. (I also discover that I failed to open the battery compartments on my hearing aids last night, which means that the batteries will die some eight hours earlier than they might have.) For breakfast, I switch back to the egg/mushrooms/beans/bacon of our first day here; again, I find the sauces on the beans and mushrooms unpleasant. Also unpleasant is the introduction of unintelligible wordless singing to the techno music that assaults our ears.

At 9:00, we set out for Caversham Wildlife Park, northeast of our hotel and, for a while, on the same roads that we traveled yesterday morning. <https://www.cavershamwildlife.com.au/> Google maps estimated that the 20 km drive would take 20 minutes, but we don't arrive at the park until 9:45. Between the parking lot and the zoo entrance, we walk through a pleasant wooded area with a wide variety of trees and shrubbery. The wildlife park is a treasure. Just past the entrance are cages with all sorts of unusual native birds, some of them with extremely raucous calls and brilliant coloration.\* And then we enter an enormous area

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**\*SEXIST AND RACIST PUN ALERT:** When Lee spots a black cockatoo, Ron replies, "Many women your age are looking for a black cock or two."

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that is packed full with kangaroos of all sizes and colors ranging from dark brown to albino white. They are not only accustomed to people, they come over to everyone in the hope that that person has brought some of their favorite food. (Kangaroo food pellets are available to every guest who can scoop them out of a bin.) The eagerness with which these animals eat might suggest that they are mal-nourished. This is, most certainly, not the case. We also spot a couple of emu in a neighboring exhibit, too far off for a picture. Here's what we learned about emus, as recounted in my 2014 travelog: "● Their stomachs growl so loudly that a visitor (me!) imagines that a freight train is bearing down on us. ● One bird, presumably the alpha emu, gets his jollies by pecking the top of the head of another; it makes a surprisingly hollow sound."



We watch the time because we want to be present when the wombats are on view at 11:00 and the koalas at 11:30. All visitors are encouraged (required?) to apply disinfectant to their hands before entering either enclosure. The wombat enclosure is opened right on time; and a line forms inside for people who want a photo-op with one of the beasts. According to Wikipedia, "Wombats are short-legged, muscular quadrupedal marsupials that are native to Australia. They are about 1 m (40 in) in length with small, stubby tails and weigh between 20 and 35 kg." Compared to their ultra-cute cousins, the koalas, wombats are (to be brutally frank) not the prettiest of animals. Nevertheless, one of them sits on its keeper's lap and waits patiently as a long line of visitors comes forth to have a picture taken. We are instructed to pet the wombat only on its feet, using the back of our hands. Why? Who knows? In light of their loose and folded skin, I suspect that they're closed to *shar pei* than to other marsupials, but I'm probably wrong. Also within the enclosure is a pair of



bettongs, described by Wikipedia this way: "Bettong, species of the genus Bettongia, are potoroine marsupials once common in Australia. They are important ecological engineers displaced during the colonisation of the continent, and vulnerable to the threatening factors such as altered fire regimes, land clearing, pastoralism and the introduced predatory species such as the fox and cat." Now you know.

And then it's onto the koalas. Approaching their enclosure, we walk past a large number of cages, each having one or two koala firmly attached to a eucalyptus tree. The public is then admitted to the enclosure. (There are hand sanitizers all along the line which forms in anticipation.) About eight handlers then arrive, each carrying one of the little animals, and people are invited to approach for a photo-op and the opportunity to stroke the back of the animal only. Ours was named Lachie. But he/she/it didn't seem to respond to it. Nevertheless, Lachie was excessively cute. Yes!



We tear ourselves away from the koala enclosure and head to the Village Café. It is very crowded (and non air-conditioned) but we manage to find seats at a table already occupied by a two adults and two children. They don't object when we ask if we may join them. Lee and I each have an ice cream bar. While there, I determine that I've taken 75 pictures at the zoo. Many are repeats and will need to be deleted, but not these two: one of a woman sporting the evil New York Yankees logo on her cap; and one of a man wearing a shirt that reads "Fuck Off I'm Fishing" (the words are accompanied by an extended middle finger.)

Why is it that the New York Yankees logo is so popular, all over the world? Let's note that this is not the first that I've seen them since arriving in Australia. There were a few at the airport and on the streets of Perth. And we'll encounter many more over the next days. Dear Reader, do you wonder why I view such things with deep revulsion? Let me 'splain. I've hated the Yankees since I was a boy and a passionate fan of the Brooklyn Dodgers. During my childhood, the Dodgers went to the World Series several times and each time were defeated by the Yankees. Now do you wonder that I hate them? And I'm not the only one. For example, Joshua Ferris in *To Rise Again at a Decent Hour* reveals himself to be a long-suffering Boston Red Sox fan. He says the following about his nemesis "... the Yankees of all teams – probably objectively the most crass and reviled team in the history of sports, with that obnoxious logo so well known, the interlocking N and Y you can find on swag in every part of the world, a symbol so offensive that only the Nazi swastika compares with it, and yet still regarded by so many as benign, something to admire, even worship, revealing the true extent of the human capacity for mass delusion ... " Couldn't have said it better myself.



We return to our hotel room where we try to stop sweating by working puzzles, surfing the internet, and reading. I finish *The Friend* - after a slow start, I have come to like it very very much. We take a taxi to *Tra Vinh* Vietnamese Restaurant, a few blocks north of the art gallery and, therefore, much too far to walk. It was highly recommended by one of the hotel's employees. It has no web site, but the menu is extensive and goes over many pages. The online reviews are mixed, but I prefer to trust the hotel man. When we arrive, only one other table is occupied. This is *not* a good sign! However ... over the course of the next 30 minutes, a large number of people arrive, eventually filling every table; some customers are even turned away because there is no space. (I'd like to think that this wave of humanity occurred because word had gotten out that the Magids are here ... but that's probably not true.) The servers speak passable English (and it's much better than my Vietnamese). SWMBO and I share an order of spring rolls. I have a chicken concoction while Lee has the equivalent concoction with pork. There are lots of veggies, excellent sauce, not too spicy. Bottom line: this was an excellent choice. There is no beer, so I order water which comes in a 1.5 L (!! ) plastic bottle. When it comes time to pay, we ask several servers for the check - but none arrives. Eventually, we discover that we need to walk to the counter at the back of the restaurant to settle our account. We ask the employee to call for a taxi ... and much to my surprise one does arrive.





We return to the hotel and, as in past evenings, are in bed early at 9:30.

## MONDAY, MARCH 9

We awaken at 6:30, another good night's sleep. At our final breakfast in *Post*, I have the buttermilk pancakes again. Our bags are packed and we're getting ready for a road trip to the south. But first, an unexpected diversion: in the courtyard between our hotel and the Anglican cathedral, there are dozens and dozens of children. The girls are all wearing the same grey print dress (sometimes accompanied by a red sweater) and the boys are all wearing white shirts and brown shorts. Apparently these are the school uniforms. And the kids arrive in groups from various directions, often accompanied by an adult. And when they arrive, they congregate in front of the church door. By the time that all have arrived, there must be more bodies in the courtyard than were present at yesterday's wedding.



At 10:00, we walk across St. Georges Street to the Stirling Gardens. Our goal is to get closeup views (and also photos) of the interesting sculptures that we've observed from the hotel's courtyard. There are some fifteen metal sculptures of kangaroos, both adults and young 'uns, at rest, at play, drinking from a fountain, etc. According to the official web site:

Stirling Gardens is the oldest garden in the City of Perth and thanks to its kangaroo statues, also one of the most recognisable and most photographed. Named after Governor James Stirling, the gardens were first used by colonial botanist James Drummond as an acclimatisation garden in the 1830s to raise specimens from seeds. The reserve officially opened as Perth's first botanical garden in 1845. The kangaroo sculptures, a water feature, a huge Moreton Bay Fig tree and fabled May Gibbs' creations Snugglepot and Cuddlepie are some of the more interesting aspects of this parkland. Many events are held in the gardens throughout the year including an ANZAC Day service, Opera in the Park and Carols by Candlelight.



Alas, the day is as hot and humid as yesterday (and the day before .... and the day before ...). We check out of the hotel at 10:45 and drive some 170 km south to the Dolphin Discovery Centre <https://dolphindiscovery.com.au/> in Bunbury, a port city on the Indian Ocean and the third largest city (population 75,000) in Western Australia. SWMBO has done all of the driving. We arrive at 12:15, surprisingly close to the time estimate of Google Maps. As we drive south, the car registers and outside temperature of 33°C. (On the leg from Bunbury to Cape Lodge, it will hit 35°C, which is 95°F for those who don't speak Celsius.) The scenery along the way is uninspiring: low bushes, occasional trees, a cow or two.



The dolphin centre, however, is wonderful, filled with display tanks housing unusual sea animals and staffed by knowledgeable docents who help visitors hold starfish in their hands, who answer questions about the unfamiliar beasts, and (on one occasion) who get drenched when an octopus



decides to express its appreciation for the lunch it's being given. In the early morning, there are also guided outings to wade in the shallow waters and interact with the dolphins who swim close to shore. We see no live dolphins, but lots of videos showing them at play. At 1:30, we repair to the centre's café for a snack: coffee and a chocolate shortbread cookie that is much too dry.

At 2:00, we resume our southward journey to Cape Lodge <https://www.capelodge.com.au/>, some 90 km to the southwest. Lee is again doing the driving. Cape Lodge is in the small town of Yallingup, population about 1,000. For the next couple of days, we'll be in what is called the Margaret River Region, which name derives from a town a little south of Cape Lodge. The grounds of Cape Lodge are vast and lovely. There is an outdoor swimming pool, several buildings, lots of green space, and many trees. We are not in the main building but in an adjacent one - no problem, except that our room is upstairs (on the so-called "first" floor). That would not be so bad if not for the fact that the spiral stone staircase leading to the second level has no hand rail. At least it has stone walls on each side, so there is something substantial for any 81-year-old guests to maintain their balance. The room is large, the bathroom is very modern, the view of the pond is beautiful, and (best of all) the air-conditioning works. Because of the stairs, I ask for help in getting our suitcases to the room.



**CUTE TOWN NAMES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA** On the drive from Perth, we pass such adorable town names as Tickety-Boo and a veritable plethora of town names ending in -up (e.g., Yallingup, Dalyellup, Dardanup, Binningup, and many more). According to several web sites, the -up ending means "place of" so Yallingup means "place of Yalling"? Apparently these towns are named for or by aboriginal peoples. Had I not learned this, I would have thought that Wonnerup would have referred to the person who finished second in some athletic event. (I wonder if there is a Batterup, a Bottomsup, a Blowup, a Catsup, or a BeamMeUp near here.) Alas, these names do not compete with one that we discovered near Sydney on our earlier trip: there exists a suburb named Woolloomooloo. That's eight O's, boys and girls. Wooooo Hooooo! Or as Mel Allen would have said, "How about that!"

The dining room is in a separate building, some distance from where we are staying (a five to ten minute walk). It's an easy enough walk past the main lodge and other parcels in daylight, but the stones tend to be loose and the lighting is poor when returning after dark. We are fortunate that I packed a small flashlight. (To their credit, the lodge also provides a flashlight in each room.) The hotel staff has reserved a table for us at 6:30 on each of the three nights that we'll be here. The dining room is elegant, the service impeccable, and the food excellent. (Its cost is buried in the price of the room.) For our first night, I start with the *soupe du jour* (which is broccoli/cauliflower) followed by "Blackwood Valley Beef Fillet," hand-cut fries, café de Paris butter. For dessert, a long black and chocolate ice cream. Lee starts with the marron tortellini, followed by the lamb special, served with roasted beets. For dessert, she indulges in "chocolate nemesis" (raspberry sorbet, fresh raspberries, chocolate soil (think crushed Oreo cookies), and a "fudgy chocolate loggy blob" and a long black. Exhausted after our long day, we collapse in bed at 10:00.

## TUESDAY, MARCH 10

Last night was not a good one for sleeping. The air conditioner is not very effective, so the room got too hot and humid. Jet lag usually affects me on the first two days of foreign travel - now it's arriving on the sixth day. Maybe tonight will be better.

Because Abercrombie & Kent changed the beginning time of today's tour from 10:00 to 8:00, we need to have a very fast breakfast. We walk to the dining room. It's a pleasant, coolish morning (can this last?) and there is a great deal of bird song everywhere. The grounds are also very beautiful in the early morning sun. The announced opening time for the dining room is 7:30 and, indeed, when we arrive at about 7:25 the door is locked and is not opened until right on the dot of 7:30. On offer are cold items



(bread, cereal, sweet rolls, etc.) plus hot items to be ordered from the menu. We have time only for the former, today. But we do enjoy the behavior of the ducks in the pond, right outside the dining room window. There was also a long-necked wading bird with a white body, a black head and tail, and a long curved beak. I doubt that we have anything of that kind in the U.S.

After breakfast, we head straight for the hotel lobby but there is no tour guide. She arrives about ten minutes later, complaining of getting caught in traffic on the way here. Nola, an older woman than Shannon, has been a guide for many years, both for A&K and Southern Crossings. At 8:50, we are at the Busselton Jetty

<https://www.busseltonjetty.com.au/> some 40 km away, and we line up for the "train" ride to the end of the jetty. At the terminus is the Underwater Observatory, described this way at the web site:



"Your Underwater Observatory tour starts with a relaxing train ride on the Stocker Preston Express along the length of the Jetty with 360-degree views across the Indian Ocean. One of our friendly tour guides will greet you at the end of the Jetty to guide you through the Underwater Observatory. As you descend 8-metres below the ocean's surface you will be lead\* through the natural wonders that lie beneath the Jetty where its piles create

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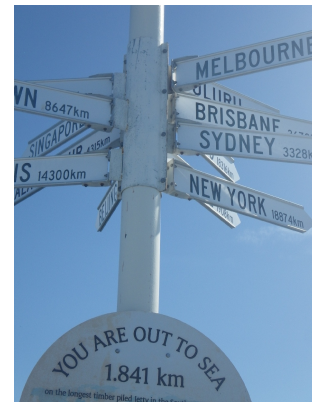
\*I don't think that they meant that you'd be turned into lead! Perhaps "led" was the intended word?

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Australia's greatest artificial reef host to an awe-inspiring forest of vividly-coloured tropical and sub-tropical corals, sponges, fish and invertebrates. Discover more than 300 individual marine species in their natural habitat through eleven viewing windows at various levels within the 9.5 metre diameter observation chamber."

Descent to the middle and lowest level requires going down a spiral metal staircase. For them what want to avoid it, there is an elevator (although it does not stop at the middle level). I opt for this gentler means of descent, accompanied by Nola. As stated at the web site, "There are six flights of ten stairs within the Observatory however there is a lift which allows access for the mobility impaired." The guide, who is leading the remainder of the group down the stairs, maintains a constant spiel which we can hear while at the bottom. The water is murky at times and the density of fish sightings can be slim, but from time to time a large fish swims by along with schools of smaller fish.

When we ascend to sea level (as it were), I notice a sign post at the end of the jetty (shown here). It tells us that the jetty is 1841 km long. And why is this significant. Because as seagoing folk (but not us landlubbers) know, 1841 km is a nautical mile.\* (I'm glad that we took the train instead of




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\*Well, not quite. According to sources I've consulted, a nautical mile is 1852 km, but that's only a 0.4% discrepancy.

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walking the length of the jetty.) I had planned to include the following information when we joined the cruise ship in New Zealand. Although I didn't know it at the time we were on the jetty, I now know that the New Zealand portion of our trip was cancelled (see the travelog entry for March 15). So I'll do my learned discussion about nautical miles\* at this point.

\*"What is a *nautical mile*?" I hear you ask. Well, you should have learned the answer to that one from my travelogs on previous cruises. So should I! But I confess that I've forgotten. So here is the answer, "purloined" from an earlier travelogue:

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Wikipedia gives this extremely "clear" description: "A nautical mile (symbol M, NM or nmi) is a unit

of distance that is approximately the length that spans one minute of arc on the surface of the Earth, measured along any meridian. By international agreement it has been set at 1,852 metres exactly (about 6,076 feet)." Now aren't you glad you asked? Perhaps it would be clearer if I told you that 1 NM is 1.1507794480235 mile? (The laptop's conversion calculator doesn't know about significant figures, does it?) I think it would be safe to say, simply, that a nautical mile is a bit longer than a mile by about 15%. Now some smarty-pants is going to ask "What is meant by a *knot*?" Well, my children, one knot is a speed of one nautical mile per hour. Right? Right. That's 1.852 km per hour or 1.151 miles per hour.

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We drive south by 42 km (almost to Cape Lodge) to Pierro Wines <https://www.pierro.com.au/> in the bustling metropolis of Willyabrup (great name!) where we arrive at 10:45. We chat with the very pleasant owner, Helen, who tells us about the varieties of wines that Pierro makes. Lee samples a few and decides what she's going to want to order, once we get to a place that organizes, packs, and ships wines overseas (tomorrow). It's a short drive (about 5 minutes) to a much much larger operation, Vasse Felix <https://www.vassefelix.com.au/> Wikipedia tells us "Vasse Felix was the first vineyard and winery to be established in the Margaret River wine region of Western Australia. Founded in Willyabrup in 1967 by Dr Tom Cullity, it is recognised as a pioneer of the region, and also features an acclaimed restaurant in Cowaramup." (Ah, yes, another of the "-up" towns and villages. Do they also have a down-town?) From their own web site:

Pristine isolation, ancient lands and twin oceans make Margaret River a wine paradise and one of the world's greatest environments to grow ultra-premium Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay. These varieties, alongside Shiraz and Semillon Sauvignon Blanc blends are the primary focus at Vasse Felix.



All wines are grown in Vasse Felix's four Margaret River vineyards then vinified and bottled within the modern winery, situated at the Home Vineyard overlooking the Willyabrup Brook.

The Vasse Felix Cellar Door - also located at the Home Vineyard - is renowned. Featuring a tasting room, wine lounge, art gallery, wine museum and one of Australia's most acclaimed restaurants, visitors are welcomed from all around the world, eager for the ultimate Vasse Felix experience.

There are many things that make Vasse Felix the special place it is: the incredible environment and climate of Margaret River, their secure family ownership, their treasured heritage, and their priceless vineyards. But above all, it's the dedication of the entire team to continue Dr Cullity's original aim for Vasse Felix: "to make the best possible wine".

After touring the tasting room, we head upstairs to the restaurant for a lunch that I'm not eager to have despite having had very little breakfast. A three-course set menu is included in the cost of our tour. We implore Nola to eat with us, saying that we'll pick up her bill. My notes do not reveal what either of us ate, but Lee's does. She writes, "Too much food! Ron has mixed mushrooms, followed by bigoli (a tubular pasta) with pea shoots and onions. Lee has duck liver parfait with a 'goo' made with stout, followed by snapper (gold band?) with leeks and tobiko (an Asian caviar). We finish with long blacks. Lee drank an sb\*/semillon blend."




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\*I figured it out - it's Sauvignon Blanc.

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And at 2:00, we are on the move again, heading to Mammoth Cave, 30 km south of Vasse Felix. <https://www.margaretriverattractions.com/caves/mammoth-cave/> This is hardly my cup of tea (and let the

record show that I *never* drink tea!) but the tickets are purchased, so Lee and I enter, accompanied by audio guides that we hang about our necks. The cave is interesting, enormous, awe-inspiring, etc. etc. etc. but after a while I need to turn back (poor lighting, difficult walking). I do get a few good photos, though.

### AUSSIE-SPEAK

- The country's name is pronounced Austreyelia, and aggressive is rendered as aggreyessive. A valiant attempt to catalog these sounds is available at several sites, including [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian\\_English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_English) Of course there are many words different from ours, particularly for car parts (as in England): boot = trunk, bonnet = hood, windscreen = window, tyre = tire (at least it's pronounced the same), petrol = fuel.
- On the audio guide (mentioned above), the narrator talked about calcium "carbonite" (which I took to mean carbonAte). There is no confusion here, but there would be if sodium sulfate were pronounced sodium sulfite, a different kind of material entirely.
- Other words pronounced with long -eye sounds are: moybe for maybe, nime for name, mine for main, aible for able, veeetable for vegetable, meen for men, conceeentric for concentric, shile for shale.
- Many times we'll hear something like "Sydney is different **to** Melbourne." (In America, we'd replace **to** with **from**, right?)

We now drive 45 km directly south, past the town of Augusta, to the Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse <https://www.margaretriver.com/members/cape-leeuwin-lighthouse/> situated (appropriately) on Cape Leeuwin where the Indian and Southern Oceans come together. Wikipedia informs us: "Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse was constructed by a company led by M. C. Davies, with George Temple Poole supervising the construction of the light and designing the keepers' quarters. It was opened with great ceremony in 1895 by John Forrest, the Premier of Western Australia. The lighthouse was automated in 1982. The lighthouse, besides being a navigational aid, serves as an important automatic weather station." The web site for the lighthouse further tells us "As the tallest lighthouse on mainland Australia, Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse is a must-see attraction. This historic lighthouse is situated at the most south-westerly point of Australia, at the tip of a spectacular peninsula - where the Southern and Indian Oceans meet." We hike out to the lighthouse, taking pictures of it and of the seas (no, I must report that the confluence of the two oceans is not apparent to the untutored eye), while trying to keep our hats and other garments from being blown away in what is, in effect, a gale force wind. The houses where the three lighthouse keepers lived and worked are open to the public; they are filled with artifacts about the history of the beacon. Especially impressive is the original Fresnel lens, now kept in the one of the houses, is impressive in size.



Nola is unaware that we have a 6:30 dinner reservation. We make it back to Cape Lodge, 85 km away, with a few minutes to spare. Maybe Lee's notes will tell what we ate? Yes they will! "Ron has the special entree - figs with gnocchi, bleu cheese, and hazelnuts. He follows with the marron tortellini (in the main dish-sized portion), and finishes with a fig tart with fig ice cream. He drinks the Sauvignon Blanc by the Lodge. Lee has the Gruyère soufflé, garnished with roasted red and orange baby beets, followed by the 'bourride' seafood soup - our young largely incompetent waiter claims that this is a town in France, just as bouillabaisse is. Say what? She finishes with an almost tasteless crème brûlée. Forgot to say: the soup is accompanied by the grilled bread for sopping up the sauce, but the bread is covered with useless mashed potatoes. Lee also drinks the Sauvignon Blanc. This is the dinner where repeated begging for a second glass of wine is required. So much for the menu's claim that wine is poured freely throughout the

meal!"

While eating dinner, I felt a piece of a crown break away from tooth #5\*. Such events seem to be a regular occurrence with me

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\*Alas, I don't know how to assign numbers to teeth. It's actually #6, the one that got not one but two root canals during 2018-9. I won't realize this error until after we return to Gig Harbor.

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whenever we travel overseas. In New Zealand, in 2010, I thought that I needed a root canal so I called Michael Flatley (my dentist in Gig Harbor) to seek his advice. It turns out that I didn't need one, but having been prescribed the powerful antibiotic augmentin, I suffered from diarrhea and nausea for three days. Then, at Doxford Hall (in Northumberland, UK) in 2018, I broke a crown but I don't recall which tooth it was. Again, I called Flatley to tell him of my mishap. So in 2020, I decide to email him to explain what has happened and to tell him that the tooth is asymptomatic.

I do this in the evening, along with sending emails to our Melbourne and Sydney friends about the days when we'll be in their cities and hoping to see them; and to Steve, Melynda, and various friends to tell them, not about the tooth, but about our journey. SWMBO and I are also becoming increasingly aware of the spread of coronavirus from China to other countries (including the U.S. where the first case and fatality occurred with a passenger arriving at Seatac from China). And we debate whether we ought to cancel the Tauck part of our trip and return home. Following this, I read (Kindle) some of E. J. Dionne's *Code Red*, a very hopeful book about how the age of Trump can be ended if the progressive and moderate wings of the Democratic Party can stop fighting each other and unite in a common cause.

We are in bed by 10:00. I hope for a full night of sleep, unlike last night.

### **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11**

Well, the good news is that I sleep through the night (except for a bout of acid reflux at 1:30) and awaken with the alarm at 6:30. It's a beautiful, clear morning, surprisingly cool (but that *will* change later today), bird sounds everywhere as we walk to breakfast. The window of the dining room affords a view of the pond on which birds and ducks (fewer than yesterday) are doing bird- and duck-things. As I did yesterday, I eat but a light breakfast: juice, corn flakes, bread and butter; Lee does the same but also orders from the hot menu poached eggs, beans, and mushrooms.

### **MORE AUSSIE SPEAK**

- **Wh**ite for wait, **bi**te for bait, **pre**cedent for precedent, **gee**ven for given, **n**ile for nail, incor**ree**ct for incorrect, and **beye**con for bacon.
- Fans of Australian Rules Football are called "footies."

### **AUSSIE SPELLING**

- Defen**ce**, authoris**ed**, colour**ur**, flavour**ur**, harbou**ur**, labour**ur**, centre**e**, lit**re**, met**re**, etc. just as is done in England.

At 9:45, we head north and a little west to Canal Rocks (Lee driving), some 11 km away and on the Indian Ocean. According to Wikipedia: "The rock formation takes its name from the narrow channel between the rocks that has formed from the coastal waters eroding the granite-gneiss away over time. The rocks that make up the canals are part of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge, or Leeuwin complex. The rocks that make up the feature consist of hornblende-biotite monzogranite gneiss that are medium to coarse-grained and moderately foliated containing minerals such as perthite, quartz, hornblende with accessory biotite, opaques, apatite, and zircon." Now aren't you glad you asked? Despite posted warnings about the fierce winds and the possibility of falls, several intrepid souls have ascended the rocks, mountain-goat style. The waves crashing against the distant rocks send up a massive spray.



Well, no trip would be complete without some ... shopping, so at 10:25 we drive from Canal Rocks to John Miller Design (in Yallingup), just 6 km away. <https://www.johnmillerdesign.com/> The store features hand-made jewelry of all sorts. How does SWMBO find these places? Well, we spend some time there and finally purchase a bracelet (featuring marri\* flowers) and a ring (featuring bees).

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\*From Merriam-Webster, marri is "a very large Australian red gum (*Eucalyptus calophylla*) having white flowers and yielding tough strong yellowish brown wood whose value as lumber is somewhat impaired by the numerous gum veins." Noted.

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And then we are on our way, again, some 15 km north to the town of Eagle Bay, situated on a small peninsula between the Indian Ocean and Geographe Bay. It features a long expanse of white sand beach and somewhat rugged coastline. We walk a bit, then get back in the car and drive along the road from Point Piquet to Castle Rock for some beautiful scenery.

And now for a non-touristic stop. Because we're required to fill the petrol tank within 15 km of approaching the Perth airport, tomorrow; and because we have no idea if we have enough petrol to get us to Perth; we stop to fill. This presents an interesting problem. First, we can't find any place at the pump into which we can insert a credit card, so I go into the office to ask how we pay. The answer: dispense the gas, then come to this office for payment. "You trust people?" I ask. "Of course," is the reply. So SWMBO inserts the hose into the car's petrol opening, but only a couple of spurts come up before the pump shuts off. Huh? This is repeated three times. Eventually we get the idea that we need to do something different. So I return to the office and learn that after inserting the petrol hose, one needs to torque it 90° to allow free flow. And it works! So at a cost of 1.409 AUD per liter, we fill the tank with 39.88 L for a total cost of 56.15 AUD. To translate this into terms that we dumb Americans can understand, 1.409 AUD is (depending on the day's exchange rate) about \$0.92 per liter which converts to \$3.51 per gallon. And we have driven 418 km (260 miles) on 10.5 gallons for a modest 25 mpg. I might have hoped for better, considering that almost all of the driving has been outside of cities.

We next drive about 40 km south to Cowaramup where we stop at the Margaret River Regional Wine Centre. Like a similar place that we visited in Adelaide in 2014, this place will bottle the wines from different wineries and ship them to our home in the U.S. <https://mrwines.com/> Lee orders 12 bottles. Directly across the road from the wine store are the Gourmet Food Market and the Candy Cow, but neither sells individual sizes of ice cream. An employee directs us to Margaret River Dairy Company <https://margaretriverdairy.com.au/> on the same road, some 5 km away, where we get coffee and a couple of scoops of ice cream. The lethargy of the store personnel, alas, reminds me of some of the desultory service that one gets in the southern U.S. The process of placing an order, having the order filled, and then paying all takes about twice as long as seems reasonable. While waiting, we help ourselves to cheese samples that are on the counter.



The temperature is now 33°C (memories of the cool morning air have faded) and we have to fight off flies as we enter and exit the car. At 2:20, after a 15-km drive, we are back at the hotel and are surprised that our room is being cleaned right now. Not being eager to descend and ascend the stone steps too many times, we sit in the living room while a crew of three women and one man finish cleaning. I devote the rest of the afternoon to reading and using the internet. I watch a small bird on our patio, crashing time after time into the sliding door window, trying to get into the room. Why?

We head to the dining room for our final dinner meal. I have corn soup and Marron Tortellini (Seafood bisque, marron crisp), finishing with a fig tart with fig ice cream. Lee begins with a gruyère soufflé, then bourride seafood soup, finishing with crème brûlée. At dinner, the remainder of my broken crown comes off. I send Michael Flatley another email to report the incident but tell him that I feel no pain. We agree that I should see him as soon as possible\* after our return. After some more reading, we go to bed.

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\*As we now know, this proves impossible. On March 18, following our expedited exit from Australia, I call his office, not knowing that Governor Inslee has ordered the shut-down of most businesses, including dental offices. Nevertheless, Barbara (his wife and receptionist) tells me that they *will* come into the office if the tooth acts up.

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## THURSDAY, MARCH 12

We are up at 6:30 and do some packing before breakfast. We had done some last night and will finish up later this morning. For breakfast, I again opt for the cold table: juice, cereal, bread. I hadn't bothered to mention it earlier but the restaurant, whether for breakfast or dinner, has new agey piano music which, in its way, is worse than the techno music encountered at the hotel restaurant in Perth. On the other hand, we are pleased to see several ducklings (in addition to the adult ducks) plus, maybe, a heron.

We check out at 9:45 and head to Perth. Now, listen, I wouldn't rat on SWMBO under ordinary circumstances but a recent event is just too good to keep to myself; besides, it will put an unnecessary wrinkle in our drive to the Perth airport. Two days ago, Lee had pondered why it was so easy to close her suitcase when leaving COMO The Treasury ... and then it dawned on her! She had neglected to pack the contents of two drawers when we checked out. And, on thinking about it, she realized that she was missing some clothing items\* and her knitting. So she calls the hotel and asks if these items were found

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\*To be specific: two light-weight jackets, most of her underwear, two blouses, a purse, and all three scarves."

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when housekeeping cleaned the room after us. A member of the hotel staff calls back later in the day and confirms that the items are, indeed, in their possession. So we tell them that we'll stop at the hotel, early this afternoon, on our way to the airport. In her journal, she writes, "Gosh - she needs to go to a home for the elderly – oops, she already has."

Now let's be clear - everybody makes mistakes as he/she/it goes through life. But what makes this incident especially delicious is that she had done the same damned thing in Wales in 2009 when checking out of Parc Hotel in Cardiff. A day after checking out, we are at Guidfa House in Llandrindod Wells, 70 miles and many challenging roads away, when Lee realizes that she left a bag of unmentionables in Cardiff. So ... when we check out of Guidfa House the next day, we need to go far far far out of our way, in the rain, on terrible roads, back to Cardiff to retrieve the bag of panties. (There, I revealed the contents of the bag). The only positive aspect to that trip is that, as I wrote in my 2009 travelog, "On the way, we pass through many towns whose names have very few vowels (at least what we would call vowels) and lots of double L's. Examples: Llyswn and LLanwrtyd Wells. Sometimes, the English town names (e.g., LLandoverly) appear on signs alongside their Welsh spelling (LLanyddyfri). And did I mention it is raining?"

We know that the journey to Perth will take about three hours, so Lee drives the first leg. At 10:40 we are passing Bunbury and are able to join the good highway, Route 1 which will connect to Route 2 as we drive north. At 11:05, we are in Binningup (love those names!) where we change drivers. On the way, we've listened to a decent classical music station. I say "decent" rather than "excellent" because of their predilection for playing single movements rather than complete symphonies and concertos. To their "discredit," they did play a piece by Joaquin Rodrigo, but at least it wasn't the *Concierto de Aranjuez*, a piece that seems to follow me everywhere, whether in the U.S. or France or England or Germany.

During the trip, the temperature has been rising steadily, starting at 28°C and reaching 32°C. At 12:00, just 20 km south of Perth, Lee takes over. We encounter two extensive slow-downs because of construction, but we do make it back to the hotel where we arrive fifty minutes later.

Now try to imagine this scene. We go to the lobby and encounter an employee whom we recognize from before. She goes to a locked storage bin and retrieves SWMBO's garments, knitting, and whatever else was left in those drawers. Lee opens her large suitcase on one of the couches in the lobby and begins rearranging clothes so as to make the newly retrieved items fit. Of course, we need to be sure to pack for "airplane" mode, as we will be flying to Melbourne later today. A little after 1:00, we are packed and can head to the airport.

It's a fairly short drive (about 11 km) to the airport, but we are cognizant of having to fill the tank with petrol. Based on what the Hertz clerk told us when we got the car, I'm convinced that we'll find lots of petrol stations on the road to the airport. Lee is dubious. And it turns out that she's right, dammit. Near the airport, we had passed a station some 5 km ago and have encountered no more since. So we turn around and, using the iPad's Google Map, we exit the highway at a place that seems likely to have petrol stations. Well, not so good. We exit the highway at Abernethy Road and drive a considerable distance, but no petrol. We pull into a shopping center and while Lee fiddles with the iPad trying to get information about petrol stations, I walk into the large Woolworths and ask a security guard. He says to drive south on Wright (the eastern border of the shopping center) and we will find a station. And sure enough, just three blocks south is a Coles Shell station.

Petrol is a bit less expensive (1.399 AUD per L) than it was near Cape Lodge, so we fill with 27.21 L for a cost of 38.07 AUD. So that's 7.2 gal for 329 km (204.3 miles) which means that we got about 28 mpg. We retrace our steps to the highway and find the Hertz rental car return where we "ditch" the car at 2:00. We walk to the Virgin Australia terminal, deposit our bags, clear security rapidly (after removing all electronic devices, laptop, coins, belt, and umbrella(!)) I come close to causing a scandal when my beltless pants begin to slide down. Have I actually lost weight on this trip?

Lee uses her AmEx card to talk our way into the Virgin lounge. (We do not have business class seats for this leg of our journey.) The lounge is very crowded and we struggle to find a table. My first goal is to sit, relax, and stop sweating. I re-set the time in my camera for Melbourne time but wait until we're on the plane to re-set my watch. When I'm finally relatively dry, I go to the cold meats table and make a sandwich of salami, baloney, cheese, and mustard. I also have a coffee. I get out my Kindle and begin reading *Costalegre* by Courtney Maum, a novel touted as a thinly disguised account of Peggy Guggenheim. After about 20 minutes, I decide that I don't like it, so I return (also on Kindle) to E. J. Dionne's *Code Red*.

We board the plane (Airbus A330) at 4:45. We have economy class seats that are at the front of the section which gives us lots of leg room. (Lee says that she paid extra for these seats.) The seats are arranged 2-4-2 so we are actually sitting next to one another without a third person in our row. The only disadvantage to these seats is that there is no pull-down tray from the seat in front; instead, we'll have to get our trays from inside the arm rests. I re-set my watch to Melbourne DST (move ahead three hours).

The safety video( noisy racing cars) is truly annoying <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hG0x0BLA3uM>

But it does get its message across. We are pushed back at 5:12 and travel about 50 feet before the plane is halted. Finally we are "released" and we are air-borne at 5:30. At 8:00, dinner is served. Because all of the savories contain cumin (I asked), I have only dessert (cumin-free). There is a screaming infant in the seat behind us. Fortunately, the little noise machine sleeps for most of the flight. During the flight, I read both *Code Red* and an issue of *The New Yorker*. We land at 11:30, 20 minutes ahead of schedule.

We are met at the airport by a non-communicative Tauck representative who delivers us to the Sofitel Hotel at 12:45. Our room is on floor 46. (Apparently, floors 35 and up belong to the hotel; the lower floors are office space. The dining room is on floor 35.) We get a "welcome envelope" from Tauck; and we finally get to bed at 2:00.

## FRIDAY, MARCH 13

We set the alarm for 8:30 and, after showering, etc., take the elevator to floor 35. We know that the name of the restaurant is "35" (how imaginative!) but we can't find ... it until another guest senses our plight and shows us the way. The good news: an extensive self-serve buffet with hot dishes and cold, a wide variety of each. The bad news: it's difficult to get a cup of coffee. The awful news: they pipe in that damned techno music. Is there no escape? I stick with cold cereal, some cold cuts, bread/butter/jam, juice, and coffee.

Back in our room, I see lots of emails from Abby (at Heron's Key), Steve (my son), and STEP about the spreading coronavirus. Again, we discuss the possibility of cancelling our trip, but decide to "soldier on."

At 10:15, we head to the lobby to meet our Tauck tour guide and to get information about the itinerary. The two guides are Anthony (call me Tony or AJ) Lapertosa and Alina Moroz. We are in the group assigned to AJ. The list of attendees shows several couples from Washington State, including two from Kirkland, the new epicenter of the virus because of the number of diagnosed cases and deaths at Life Care Center, a retirement community. AJ tells us that a large number of people on the roster will not show up, as they have already cancelled. There are 66 names on the printed list, down from the 78 that showed up at Tauck's web site, downloaded to my phone.

While waiting online\* to register, Di and Jock MacNeish appear. (This was planned, not spontaneous.)

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\*A curiosity: In the year 2020, "waiting online" has a very different meaning from "going online"

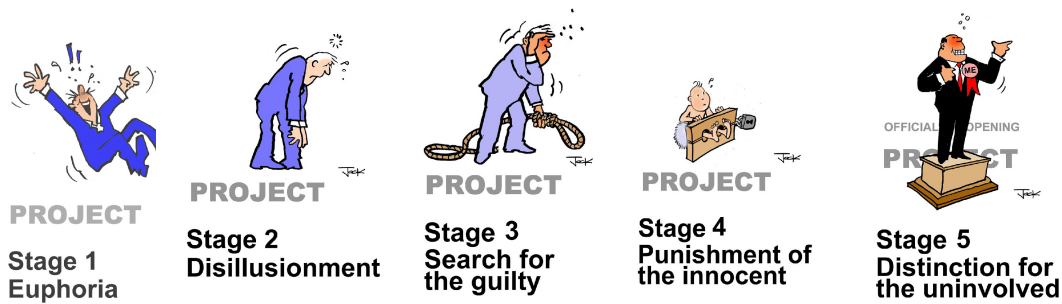
They lead a walk of the immediate neighborhood, allowing us to explore the many courts and alley ways with their restaurants, clothing stores, upscale chocolatiers, etc. One of the more intriguing is the indoor Block Arcade <https://theblock.com.au/> As we stroll, we share stories and try to catch up on what's gone on in our lives since we last saw one another in 2016 on a Tauck Japan cruise. We also bitch and moan about the horror of Trump and his policies, something we didn't believe could ever have come to pass when we first met during the presidential primary season in March, 2016. I'm finding the walk a bit tiring; and the day is turning warm and humid. We stop from time to time on strategically placed benches. During the walk, I encounter two New York Yankees caps. For shame!!



We also visit the Royal Arcade: "Opened in 1870, The Royal Arcade is the oldest surviving arcade in Australia and connects Little Collins, Elizabeth Street, and the Bourke Street Mall. Ornate and flooded with sunlight, Royal Arcade is a heritage listed shopping precinct comprising boutiques and gift shops. Watch the mythical statues of Gog and Magog strike the clock every hour at the southern entry, before treating yourself at one of Melbourne's best chocolate cafés – Koko Black – and indulge in their signature Belgian hot chocolate."



We stop for lunch in an Italian Restaurant (whose name I don't recall) in an open-air arcade (whose name I also don't recall), but I do recall what I ate: a very generous serving of spaghetti and meatballs. While eating, Jock regales us with his observations on the five stages that a project undergoes for all companies, no matter which firm, what industry it's part of, where it's located, etc. He also produces witty cartoons to illustrate the five stages:



A highlight of our walking tour is a visit to the Supreme Court of Victoria on Lonsdale, just four blocks north of Collins. <https://www.supremecourt.vic.gov.au/> It's in a historic building, quite musty and lacking in good ventilation. Most of the rooms are locked, because either a trial is in progress or no trial is scheduled. By chance, one of the Court's four building engineers sees us muddling along, so he becomes a tour guide. He opens one of the locked courtrooms and explains how trials are held, who gets to speak, what formalities are maintained (e.g., everyone who enters the room bows to the magistrate in the chair), and so on. I tell him that we enjoy the Australian courtroom TV series *Janet King* and ask if it's an authentic depiction of what goes on. He says that a better one is called *Rake*. (Back home, we learn that there are five seasons of *Rake* on DVD, all of them available from Pierce County Library.)

We walk back to the hotel and enjoy the company of Di and Jock over cups of coffee. They leave at about 3:00 and we return to our room. I am surprised to see the bag of laundry that I had left for morning pickup still in the room. (Early this morning, unable to get anyone to answer the phone, I walked to the reception desk and asked to have someone to pick it up. Apparently such personal contact was not the way to go.) While using the computer for email, internet, etc., I get a Kindle notice saying that another of my e-books is available for download: *Lady in the Lake* by Laura Lippman. So I retrieve it, hoping that none of my books whose loans had expired would be snatched away once I removed the Kindle from airplane mode. Well, the download was successful and the book collection remained intact.

At 6:00, we go to the Tauck reception on Floor 35, not far from Restaurant 35 where we'll have dinner. We get to meet a number of interesting people (surprisingly everyone we talk to can't resist beginning the conversation with how much they despise Trump). One of the more effusive women, a "toucher" and a virulent Trump-hater, shows me two videos about the Boy-Child-President that I download when I get back to the room. Her husband is her opposite: taciturn and so devoted to his business that he often retreats to a corner with his laptop to connect with his employees. (He also does this the next morning at breakfast and the next afternoon after our morning Tauck tour.) To "impress" the rest of us, he urges his wife to tell what a strong and demanding boss he is - sounds like the adoration society that Trump surrounds himself with. Nevertheless, he is a pleasant person as are the others whom we meet before and during dinner. Anthony and Alina take the microphone to welcome us, to explain what tomorrow's tour will be like, and to explain that when we fly to Cairns the following day it would be best if we had as few carry-ons for the plane as possible. Apparently, AJ and Alina are long-time friends who like to do tours together. He is from New York. She describes herself as Russian-Lithuanian-Canadian-American. We also learn that there are six additional guests who are at another hotel with a third guide, Miles.

Along with the laundry foul-up (and, as you'll soon learn, the saga is not over), another example of incompetence of the hotel staff is this: when we registered at the Tauck desk in the morning, we were asked to select (from a group of three) what main course we would like to eat at dinner; and also to select our dessert. This makes sense - it allows the kitchen staff to prepare the correct number of dishes. I order pork cutlet, steak and potatoes, peanut parfait, and coffee. What does *not* make sense is that, because the guests are seated randomly around the dining room, servers carrying large trays of several meals don't know which table to go to. Seems to me, someone should have thought of this. At least the wine is free-flowing.

This afternoon when I discovered the laundry bag, I considered leaving it until the next day, but fearing that it would still not be picked up, I call the reception desk at 9:50 in the evening - much to my surprise, someone comes to our room about 10 minutes later to collect the bag. Now, the question is, when will it be returned? Stay tuned. We go to bed at 10:30

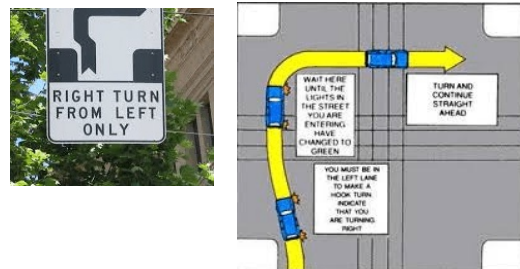
## SATURDAY, MARCH 14

Although the alarm was set for 6:15, we are both up at 6:00, eager for our first Tauck tour. Following breakfast (same as yesterday, but less of a hassle to get coffee), we go to the lobby to await the bus tour of Melbourne set for this morning. The bus arrives at 9:15 and we are off.

We arrive at Queen Victoria Market at 9:30. From our 2014 visit, we know that we want to get through the tchotchke area (purses, belts, scarfs, etc.) to the food courts (meat, fish, cheese, breads, fresh produce) but we are admonished to return to the bus by 9:50. Well! I'm glad that we were setting our own time standards on the 2014 visit because today's venture proved to be an unsatisfying run-through. Nevertheless, I do get some good pictures. (The day is cloudy, cool, and breezy. Because I have foolishly not brought a jacket with me, I'm suffering.)

When we dutifully return to the bus at 9:50, the driver announces that he's going to execute a HOOK TURN. Say what? We already knew about this from our earlier visit, but it was a revelation to others. Here is the explanation:

Nearly all of the east-west major street in downtown Melbourne have tram tracks, as do a few of the north-south ones. Now picture an east-west street, horizontally in your mind's eye, with east on your right. The street has six lanes. The two lowest are for vehicles that are traveling from east to west (i.e., from right to left) - recall, this is Australia, not the U.S. The two highest are for vehicles moving left to right. Between these lanes for cars and trucks, there are two tram lines: the lower one is for trams traveling right to left, the higher for trams going the other direction. Now, imagine that you are in a car traveling from east to west and you want to make a right turn at a particular intersection - this will require your crossing two tram lines as well as two lanes of west-to-east car traffic. To prevent you from blocking the trams, what you do is approach the intersection and pull to the far *left*. (Why left? I thought we were making a right turn! Bear with me.) And you pull into the intersection, staying to the left. (This has the advantage of allowing cars that are traveling from east to west to pass you on your right.) You put on your right directional signal and wait until your light changes from green to red. At that moment, you make a hard right turn across two lanes of cars heading westward, plus two tram lines, and two lanes for cars heading to the east. And if all goes well, you complete the turn. Perhaps two or three other drivers behind you will also succeed in making this turn.



It all works brilliantly, except when it doesn't. What can possibly go wrong? Well, since your sharp right turn has put you in a north-bound direction, you are counting on drivers in the top two lanes to wait



patiently even though their light has turned green. Should one of them decide to jump the gun, a collision occurs. The other thing that can go wrong is if traffic heading north backs up into the intersection - then you find yourself stopped, perhaps on the tram tracks, to the great annoyance of everyone. Melbourne is the only Australian city to allow hook turns. For a video showing how a local driver overcomes the fears of his passenger, see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoUPGLn38-A>

We drive a short distance to "Cathedral Church and Minor Basilica of Saint Patrick" (better known as St Patrick's Cathedral) and are given enough time to walk in the door, take a few pictures, and walk out. (As was the case at Victoria Market, we are feeling very rushed.) Constructed in the mid-1800s, the cathedral was blessed by Pope Paul VI and visited by Pope John Paul II. (These are considered major milestones by the church hierarchy.) By the way, did I mention that the day is cold ... and so am I? The temperature is 22°C and the wind is whipping around. (At this point, there is a minor calamity - the memory stick in my camera is full; and its replacement is back at the hotel room. I have no choice but to delete some old pictures in order to take new ones.)



From there, the bus driver takes us past the various sport complexes: Rod Laver Arena, Margaret Court Arena, Melbourne Arena (used for tennis, Australian Rules Football, soccer, hockey, track and field), and Melbourne Cricket Ground\* (with a seating capacity of over 100,000). Our driver regales us with

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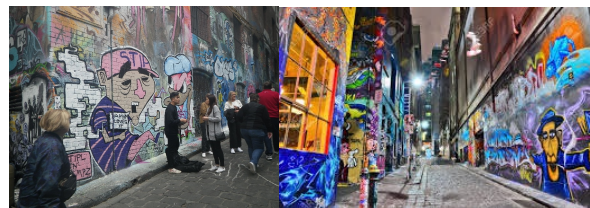
\*Fun Fact - People in the know abbreviate it as MCG or, simply, G. You have been informed.

examples of Australian slang. For example, "a bit picadilly" means "a bit chilly" (an apt expression for today). An extensive list of Australian slang can be found at <http://www.darkblueknight.com/slang01.html>. The bus tour terminates at Federation Square (two blocks to the south and four to the west from our Hotel), described by Wikipedia as "arts, culture and public events on the edge of the Melbourne central business district" and we are handed off to another tour guide, Melynda, who will lead us on a walk through the center city's streets.

We stop at the Shrine of Remembrance, dedicated to those who lost their lives in World War I. We then walk through the theater district and past the very unusual structure that is the National Gallery of Victoria (familiarily NGV) with its excellent collection of paintings, sculpture, prints, and photography. We visited this gallery in 2014, but it's not on the schedule for this year. Although it has a focus on Australian art, it also houses old masters like van Dyck and Rembrandt, as well as more contemporary artists like Monet and Modigliani.



We then walk down two of the more interesting arcades/alleys/whatever in Melbourne. Hosier Lane is decorated on each side wall by large garish cartoons/graffiti, often featuring comics characters or action heroes or just figments of the artists' imaginations. And then it's ACDC Lane. Wikipedia tells us "The lane is named as a tribute to the famous Australian rock and roll band AC/DC. AC/DC Lane is perhaps most famous for housing the Cherry Bar, a famous rock music bar and nightclub ... The trademark lightning bolt or slash ("/") used to separate the 'AC' and 'DC' in the band's name contravened the naming policy of the Office of the Registrar of Geographic Names, so the punctuation was omitted on the street sign. One month after the renaming a lightning bolt was erected above and below the street sign by an artist named Knifeyard."



**FUN FACT:** John Batman, in 1835, settled the region along the Yarra River that became the city of Melbourne. Named Batmania, the city was renamed Melbourne in honor of Lord Melbourne. What a shame. Batmania is *such* a good name.

We've been walking for about an hour-and-a-half and my legs are beginning to complain, not out loud where everyone can hear, but definitely in my own mind. We find ourselves across Collins Street from the hotel, so I cut my tour short, while SWMBO goes ahead with the group for another 45 minutes or so. I lie down, hoping to nap, but sleep does not come.

At 2:00, Lee has returned and I revive a bit, so we look online at reviews of nearby restaurants. We decide on an Italian restaurant quite near the hotel. We then head down to the lobby for a refreshing coffee and pastry. There is also an ATM on this level, so we get some additional Australian money. We also walk down the hallway where lawyers, physicians, accountants, etc. have offices. We look to see if Dr. Birman\* is still here, but he's not listed in posted directory. (Online, it does show him with an address

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\*"Who is Dr. Birman? Have I missed something?" No, but that's because you haven't read my 2014 travelog from our first visit to Melbourne. On March 9, 2014, in Sydney, I tripped and hurt my knee. The pain continued to bother me throughout the trip, so on March 26, in Melbourne, I asked our hotel concierge to recommend a doctor. I made an appointment to visit him at the Sofitel Hotel later that day. As I wrote in my earlier travelog, "Dr. Sam, as he's called by his receptionist, looks like he came right out of central casting from a group of 'my' people in Brooklyn. This image is belied, alas, by his Australian accent. His office walls have posters signed by some of his famous patients who, I assume, needed medical attention or re-supplies of their drugs when performing in Melbourne. He has signed posters of Mike Jagger, Bon Jovi, the Fleetwood Mac band, and a cartoon drawn by and signed by Bill Hanna (creator along with Joseph Barbera of such beloved cartoon figures as Yogi Bear The Flintstones, the Jetsons, and others.) Although he doesn't ask me to supply a signed publicity photo (damn!), he does wonder if we have family in Melbourne. It turns out that some Magids (are they related to me?) are the developers of the numerous Westfield Shopping Centres across Australia and New Zealand; one of the largest, Fountain Gate, is southeast of downtown Melbourne and is situated on ... wait for it ... Magid Drive!" He ordered an x-ray (no break) and prescribed some stronger pain medicine.

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a this hotel - perhaps out of date?)

Do you remember the laundry foul-up from yesterday? Well, here's the denouement of the story. Because there was no laundry returned to our room by 1:30 and because we are checking out tomorrow, I call the front desk to inquire about my clothes, clean or not. I'm told that it will be delivered "soon" and that someone will call ahead of time. I'm even offered a box of chocolates(!) because of yesterday's problems.

A short while later, a man dressed as a butler and wheeling a wardrobe cart, arrives at our door. (What happened to the promised call?) He hands me several pairs of slacks encased in plastic, but I tell him that I sent only one pair. I even point out which one it is. Before I can grab it and the bag of laundry, he wheels away and says that he has to return to his office. A few minutes later he returns. Again, there is the confusion about the pants, but he finally agrees to give me what's mine (and not what's not mine). On his cart are *six* sealed plastic bags, each filled with clean laundry. None seems to have a name or room number on it. So, he starts opening bags, but it's not until the very last one that we find my three pairs of underpants, three pairs of socks, and two knit shirts. Without any names on the other bags, he's going to have an interesting time returning them to their owners.

A short time later, a hotel receptionist calls. I tell her about this most recent foul-up and I ask how the hotel service can be so confused. She asks if I'm traveling with anybody else and if I've booked another room, apparently thinking that I've got three or four friends whose laundry was on the cart. I assure her that the only person I'm traveling with is my wife! (The bottom line is that when we check out tomorrow, there'll be no charge for the laundry. Either they decide to waive the fee because of everything that's gone

wrong, or, as I believe, they simply screwed up their accounting.)

Just one block from our hotel, on Little Collins Street, is an Italian restaurant called Lupino Bistro: <https://www.broadsheet.com.au/melbourne/restaurants/lupino-bistro#> It's an unpretentious place with delicious food: I have a rocket salad with walnuts and gorgonzola, then spaghetti with muscles and lemon, finishing with a coconut tart. Leer has the same salad, then pumpkin tortellini with prosciutto and sage, finishing with tiramisu. Although only a short walk back to the hotel, the temperature has dropped and the winds have picked up. We're cold and unhappy!

But not as unhappy as we will be ... because in the evening, Lee gets messages from Stefan Bisciglia (see p. 3) informing us that New Zealand has closed all of its ports to cruise ships until July 30. Our itinerary calls for us to fly to Queenstown on March 19 and, two days later, to board a cruise ship in Dunedin for a nine-day cruise around the north and south islands. I guess that we'll find out tomorrow what Tauck plans for us.

What a shame! Not only were we really eager to revisit that country, but we were "intrigued" by Tauck's description of the planned visit to White Island (written before the volcanic explosion of Dec. 9, 2019:

Tour activities on the White Island cruise will include a "zodiac" type boat ride to and from the island; a dry (i.e., dock) landing on the island that necessitates climbing in and out of the boat on an iron ladder without safety devices; and hiking over varied terrain (including rocks and boulders and natural uneven terrain) having a range of surface conditions (including wet, slippery, loose, rough, or uneven surfaces). Attendant risks may include falling out of a "zodiac" or similar boat; fatigue; falling, tripping, or slipping; hypothermia, heat exposure, or other exposure to the elements including sulfur gases; and other risks usually associated with such activities; any or all of which may cause Damages. [upper case is in the original].

Well, of course Tauck cancelled the White Island adventure, but having read all of the above I doubt very much that the timid and feeble Magids would have attempted it.

We assume that the Cairns and Sydney visits are still in the works, so we pack our suitcases for tomorrow morning's charter flight. Having been cautioned, more than once, to have as little hand-held luggage as possible, I manage to stuff my briefcase and laptop into my hard-sided suitcase, leaving only my carry-on with one day's worth of clothes and toiletries, plus my Kindle, camera, and VoxBox. Our instructions are to leave our large suitcases outside the door, no later than 6:15 tomorrow morning. We get to bed at 10:30.

## **SUNDAY, MARCH 15**

Overnight, Stefan emails us with the news that New Zealand has, indeed, closed its borders. Assuming that the Australian segment of our itinerary will remain intact, he's working on getting us flights from Sydney to the U.S. on March 19.

Happy Ides of March!!

"Beware the Ides of March," said the soothsayer to Caesar. Brutus (already part of the plot) repeats, "A soothsayer bids you beware the ides of March." Well, Caesar ignored the warnings and we all know how badly that day turned out for him.

After breakfast, we return to our room to make sure that everything is packed. (The suitcases outside the door have been picked up ... presumably by someone authorized to do so.) At 7:50, we go to the lobby to check-out and to assemble for the bus ride to the airport. Tauck's tour directors, Anthony and Alina, inform us that Tauck has now cancelled the Cairns and Sydney legs of the journey. (The reason? Cairns

has a small airport - it would be a problem if we were to find ourselves stranded there.) Tauck has struck a deal with the hotel to allow us to stay in our rooms all day at no charge; and we're told that our luggage is being re-delivered to the room whence it was removed.

While Anthony and Alina are assuring us that Tauck is trying to get flights for all of us, Lee is taking matters into her own hands by calling Stefan to see what can be arranged. In the meanwhile, Lee finds a Qantas flight, but at an extraordinary increase in price, so we ask Stefan to keep looking. We sit in the lobby while Lee and Stefan exchange emails. Finally he finds something: a flight from Melbourne to Brisbane this afternoon followed, almost immediately, by a flight to Los Angeles, both on Virgin Australia. We'd have to stay overnight at an airport hotel, then fly to Seattle the next morning. It's not ideal, but it's a reasonable alternative at a difficult time. The details: DL 7296 (VA 351) Melbourne to Brisbane, 7:00 pm to 8:10 pm (flying time 2:10, but with a change of time zone); DL 795 (VA 9) Brisbane to Los Angeles, 9:30 pm to 5:30 pm (flying time 13:00); DL 158, LAX to SEA, 6:00 am to 9:00 am on March 16. The first two legs give us business class seats; the final leg is first class. We are to stay overnight at an airport Hilton.

We are back in our room at 8:45, relieved to see that our suitcases are already here. I have the time to unpack my stuffed-to-the-gills hard-sided suitcase by removing my briefcase and laptop. I take the opportunity to send emails to sons Steve and Larry, to Irene (in Sydney), and to Jesse (our airport driver in the U.S.) of the sudden change in plans. I'm delighted when Jesse emails me with the news that he will be able to meet our plane at Seatac when it lands at 9:00 am on March 16. I also email Jock, saying how pleased I am that we got to see him and Di; and to ask for details on the five stages of a project (see p. 27) because my notes are somewhat illegible. What a surprise! Finally, I send emails to Heron's Key friends (the Pines and Vazquezes) and to my dentist (see pp. 22 and 24).

We have many hours before we need to leave for the airport, so we return to Block Arcade (p. 25) so that SWMBO can purchase a couple of scarves and then stop at Haigh's Chocolates to buy gifts to take home. An aisle off the main hallway has a large number of casual eateries. We go to Brown Sugar for a calamari sandwich (Lee) and a BLT (me). Both on the walk to the gallery (about 20 minutes) and, especially, on the walk back to the hotel, my legs are giving me trouble. It's a good thing that there are many benches on Collins Street on which I can rest. We pass a young woman who is not only sporting a cap with the hated New York Yankees logo, but the NYY is adored with a flower!

Tauck has arranged a ride to the airport for us. While waiting for the car to arrive, we chat with Anthony and Alina. I tell Anthony that his last name (Lapertosa) is suspiciously similar to the name of the cruise ship (*La Lapérouse*) that we'll now never get to board. I tell him about how delighted we've been with the quality of the Tauck tour directors we've encountered, particularly the husband-and-wife pair of Tim and Elise Lentz on our 2016 Japan trip. Anthony and Alina are thrilled to hear those names - it turns out that the Lentzes were the ones who recruited the two friends and made it possible for them to join Tauck. This gives me the opportunity to tell about the practical joke that several of us played on Tim (not worth telling here) and also about how the people in Tim's group were the only ones who knew to shut off their VoXBox at night. Elise and the other two tour directors must have inherited the "retard" group. They were continually cadging batteries from Tim whose supply lasted the entire trip.

A sad note: I ask Anthony and Alina if they'll be paid for the remainder of this aborted trip. They say that they won't. And if the disease continues (as we now know that it will) through the coming months, causing cancellation of all travel, they'll be effectively unemployed. How sad.

The car arrives at 4:30. The driver is amazingly knowledgeable about U.S. sports. He's a fan of NFL football and tapes the games so that he can watch them at his leisure. We talk about Australians who play sports in the U.S.: Michael Dickson, punter for the Seattle Seahawks; Ryan Rowland-Smith, former MLB pitcher and now an analyst on ROOT Sports; and NBA basketball stars like Ben Simmons, Andrew Bogut, and Matthew Dellavedova.

Virgin Atlantic's bag check is very efficient. Surprisingly, the business class lounge is located *before*



security. It is very crowded and noisy, but we do find a place to sit. I have coffee and some nuts and other snacks. Why is it so noisy? First, because many people are speaking LOUDLY on their cell phones. Also, unlike all of the Australians we've encountered earlier, many of these people are pushy. Do they think that they are the sharp-elbowed French women who descend like famished harpies on a buffet? Maybe I should take back the nice things I said (p. 12) about courteous drivers?

At 6:10, we head to security. We are required to remove items from our pockets (not clear why, given that no full-body scanner was used), to remove the laptop (but no other electronics), and to remove my belt. The plane is a Boeing 737 (not 737max, *Gott sei dank*) with just two rows of seats in first class (not business class). In the row in front of us, and in my line of sight but not Lee's, is a man who constantly plays with his hair curls, twisting and godknowswhat else, more or less throughout the flight. He also picks his nose from time to time. Cool! Lee orders dinner, but I have none. I spend the flight time reading *Code Red* and working crossword puzzles.

The plane lands in Brisbane about 10 minutes late, but there is no worry about making our connection because Lee has ordered a wheelchair for me. And it's a good thing because we have to switch to the International Terminal. One wheelchair operator takes me (with poor SWMBO trying to keep up, while maneuvering one wheeled carry-on - the other is on my lap - and a hand-held) through the terminal and down an elevator to wait for a bus that takes us to the second terminal where another wheelchair operator eventually shows up. We have to go through security (empty pockets, remove belt) and passport control (with an eye scan) but the good part is that the wheelchair operator does get us to the front of the line. We then make it to the departure gate with boarding already in progress. (If not for the wheelchair, I suspect that we wouldn't have made our connection.) And then, very strange, at the departure gate an employee quizzes us on where we've been, how long we've been in Australia, if we packed our own bags, if the luggage had been in our possession all the time, etc. The strangest question she asks is if we'd been in the UK.

The plane is a Boeing 777. We have seats 8A and 8D which, not so obviously, are just across the aisle from one another. Well, not quite. Yes, we are separated by the aisle, but my seat is forward from hers, making communication across the aisle difficult. (And you thought that Democrats and Republicans couldn't communicate across the aisle!) Best news: the seats are wide; the monitor in front is large; and the seat belts are huge (but there is no shoulder and lap). There are actually *two* business class sections. We are in the front row of the second section. In between the two sections is a galley and a bar!! Yes, a bar. There are four stools in front of the bar; and the shelves of the bar will be stocked with spirits and wines once the plane is airborne. The time (Brisbane standard time) is 9:00. Our departure is scheduled for 9:30. Of course, not everything is "perfect" - while waiting for the rest of the passengers to board, we are "serenaded" by more damned techno music!

A flight attendant visits each passenger, explaining how the operation of the monitor, the lights, the seats, etc. and saying that someone will help convert the seat into lie-flat bed, if desired. Menus are distributed. I order pecorino parmesan salad; then braised beef, potato gratin, baby beans. And we are "treated" to that same annoying safety video involving racing cars (see p. 25-26). Right on schedule, the doors are closed, we are pushed back, and we are in the air. A special(?) treat: pajamas are distributed for those who want them.

I settle in by reading *Code Red* (Kindle) and my one remaining issue of *The New Yorker*. At 10:15 (Brisbane standard time) or 11:15 (daylight time), warm nuts and a neat Talisker are presented. Dinner is served at 11:35 (12:35). My analysis: the salad and braised beef are good, the potatoes much too highly seasoned.

On the two flights from Seattle to Perth, I abandoned my lifelong contention that only cretins watch movies on airplanes by watching several. Having been thus corrupted, I scan the rather meager list\* of available

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\*That's an unfair characterization. There are a number of first-run and classic films available, but

they're just not to my taste or I've seen them: *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*; *Harry Potter*; *Burn After Reading*; *Lost in Translation*; *The Post*; *Ford vs. Ferrari*; *Frozen II*; etc.

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movies and opt for *Motherless Brooklyn*, which I recall had received excellent reviews. Sigh. After about 15 minutes of incomprehensible mumbling from Ed Norton and the others in the cast, I give up. So, now I guess I'm a born-again virgin. (How appropriate for it to have happened on Virgin Australia!)

At 1:45 (12:45), dessert is brought around. It's chocolate ice cream in its original cardboard tub. Alas, it's completely melted, leading to a godawful mess as the lid is removed. Following this, I close my eyes and try to sleep (without putting on the pj's and going full lie-flat with my seat). I awaken nearly two hours later, so I get up to stretch my legs. And whom do I run into than ... Lee, who is also on a walk-about to stretch her legs. She is wearing the pajama bottoms, but not the top. (No, she's not nude from the waist up, you dirty-minded individual!) From one of the flight attendants, I get an orange juice and a small box of chocolates.

Now it's time to re-set my watch for PST, so I move it 18 hours from 4:20 am on March 15 to 10:20 am on March 16. Amazing!! I fall asleep for another 1.5 hours. One movie title that I didn't mention, earlier, and that I decide to watch (there goes my virginity again!) is *The Shape of Water*. It is excellent, so I encourage Lee to watch it as well.

It is now 3:30 pm and we are served ... breakfast! (As if the time change and date change aren't enough, now my circadian rhythm is being destroyed by food service at inappropriate times.) I have muesli, fruit, juice, roll, and *filter* coffee. FILTER COFFEE, where have you been for the past two weeks? I drink two cups. A flight attendant asks if I'll want a wheelchair at LAX. I turn it down, partly because we have no tight connection to make but mostly because of how hard it was on Lee. If I get tired, we can halt our walk and rest a bit.

At 5:10, we break through the clouds as the plane makes its descent. The coastline of California, north of Los Angeles, comes into view, then disappears as more clouds appear. The plane sets down at 5:30, right on schedule. The sky is quite overcast (what would LA's Chamber of Commerce have to say?) and we make our way through passport control (Global Entry cards are not needed, as just scanning the passports reveals that we are members). And when we reach the immigration official, there are no questions about our health or where we've been or what we're carrying.

We take a bus to the Hilton and check-in, then go back down to the lobby to the casual bistro for sandwiches (quite good!) and coffee. Need I mention, FILTER COFFEE? Back in our room, I set the alarm for 2:15 (!! ) because our flight leaves at 6:00 am and we have no idea if there will be lines, extra security, whatever at the airport. We get to bed at 10:00

## MONDAY, MARCH 16

I guess that my body isn't ready for PST and that my brain is worried about getting up so early, but I awaken at 11:30, go back to sleep, and awaken for good at 12:45 and read until it's time to wake Lee. The constant noise of departing planes, so intrusive earlier in the evening, persists in the wee hours, though to a lesser extent. For an airport hotel, the windows do not do a surprisingly poor job of keeping out the sound.

Lee had showered last night (to save time this morning) but I go ahead and wash the many hours of Melbourne and airplane ambience from me. We descend to the hotel lobby at 3:00, check-out, and hop on a bus that arrives in just a few minutes. Well, as it turns out we are *much* too early when we arrive at the terminal. Not only are there no Delta employees at the ticket counters but the TSA people are just straggling in, two or three at a time. About the only people we see in the terminal are homeless who,

apparently, are permitted to stay overnight. Some of them, men and women, walk from one end of the terminal to the other or sleep on available chairs. And over a period of some 45 minutes, more TSA employees arrive, some in uniform, some not yet properly garbed.

When the Delta staff finally arrives, we check-in, get boarding passes, and leave out large suitcases. We then get into a line for security, but are held there because the TSA agents are at a mandatory briefing. Oh. The big surprise is that security is a breeze - nothing needs to be removed from pockets nor from our carry-ons. (I just know that when I finally get "brave" and don't put my small bottles of liquids in a clear, zipped plastic bag - that will be the time when these liquids will have to be displayed for inspection.)

At 4:30 am, we reach the Delta lounge just as it is opening. Changes caused by the coronavirus are already evident. Customers do not get food or rolls or juice or whatever from the counter; instead, a uniformed employee, wearing plastic gloves, retrieves the items on request. This works very well early in the morning. I wonder what it will be like around lunchtime when large, hungry crowds have formed. And what assaults our ears as soon as we enter? Why, of course, it's techno music! Why can't I just resign myself to the fact that such music is now the fabric of our aural lives, no matter what public place we're in, nor what country. I yearn for those days of yore when it was just sweet, melodious "elevator music" that we had to endure. Knowing that we'll be fed breakfast on the plane, I have only a sweetened slice of bread, a hard-boiled egg (for variety), cheese slices and coffee. No more long blacks, if you please.

On her iPad, Lee is reading today's *Seattle Times*. People are staying away from the art museum, Pike Place Market, bars and restaurants, and other typical gathering spots. But, still, they are clearing grocery stores, Costco, and Target of toilet paper and disinfectant wipes. Oy!

We board the plane, a Boeing 737, at 5:30. There are four rows of seats in first-class. We have seats 2C and 2D. (The decor is dull, the seats are crummy, everything looks so down-market. If this is first-class, what does the economy cabin look like?) At 5:45 am, the doors are closed, 15 minutes ahead of schedule. This should be a quick get-away.

Not so fast!! There is a problem with the forward door. (Our seats are close to it and we can watch the action.) First, flight attendants try to get it to seal. Then they call in the flight engineer or captain. No success. Crew from outside (big guys in yellow vests) enter, work on the door for a while, then remove it from its hinges (or whatever), work on it some more, and finally it's fixed and the door is closed at 6:18. So much for early departure. I suggest to one of the flight attendants that he job is to stand at the door and hold it closed during the flight, but she rejects my idea.

Well, the delay caused us to lose our window for departure, but finally we get on the runway and into the air at 6:35. We head out over the ocean, then make an immediate right turn for Seattle. The captain announces on the intercom that the expected flying time is two hours. So why did their boarding pass indicate three hours (from 6:00 to 9:00)? At 7:00 breakfast is served: a croissant sandwich with fried egg, Gouda, and beans - not only cold, but inedible. But it does have some nice fresh fruit alongside it.

Lucky me, I always seem to acquire a fellow passenger with unusual bodily behavior. (No, not Lee.) Sitting in front of me is a red-haired woman who cannot sit still. She bounces, she flails her arms, she leans forward and backward - it's fortunate that nobody is sitting in the seat adjacent to hers. (Maybe she paid for both seats?) She reminds me of the American millennial who sat in front of me at the baseball game at Tokyo Dome and spent his time swaying left and right, talking to pals, totally unaware that a game was going on (and blocking my view of the on-field action).

As the plane begins its descent, we get great views of Mount Rainier, but I'm unable to recognize any features on the ground, even when we're over Tacoma. The plane lands at 8:45. We walk (slowly, for me) to baggage claim where (miracle of miracles) our luggage arrives first. I call Jesse's phone number. He drives from the cell phone waiting area to pick us up. On the drive to Gig Harbor, we quiz him about the status of coronavirus in the area. He appreciates the fact that the highways are relatively uncrowded,

but worries about his business because many clients have cancelled upcoming trips. He agrees that people are over-reacting in their attacks on the food and supplies shelves at groceries and department stores. So it comes as a surprise to learn later this day, that Gov. Inslee is closing non-essential businesses and urging everyone to stay at home.

When we arrive at Heron's Key, we notice some significant changes. Beyond the sliding doors, there is a table set up for visitors to check in and describe their recent travel and health conditions. Over the next weeks, this will turn into a "no visitors" policy, including relatives. For those who *have* to enter (e.g., USPS employees, package deliverers), their temperature will be taken by the concierge. Before we can take the elevator to our apartment, Amy Webb (Executive Director of Heron's Key) comes from her office to tell us that we need to self-isolate for 14 days because of our extensive travel. (Self- ominously like Mitt Romney's 2012 plan for undocumented isolation sounds workers to self-deport.) I post this sign on our door and mark off each day of our 14 day-sentence.



#### **DAYS IN CONFINEMENT**

Because of the rude curtailment of our journey, I manage to read **none** of the physical books that I packed: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon, *Shards of Memory* by Ruth Praver Jhambvala, and *The Safety of Objects* by A. M. Homes. I do read two Kindle books *The Friend* by Sigrid Nunez and *Code Red* by E. J. Dionne, Jr. And I read several magazines, most notably four issues of *The New Yorker*.