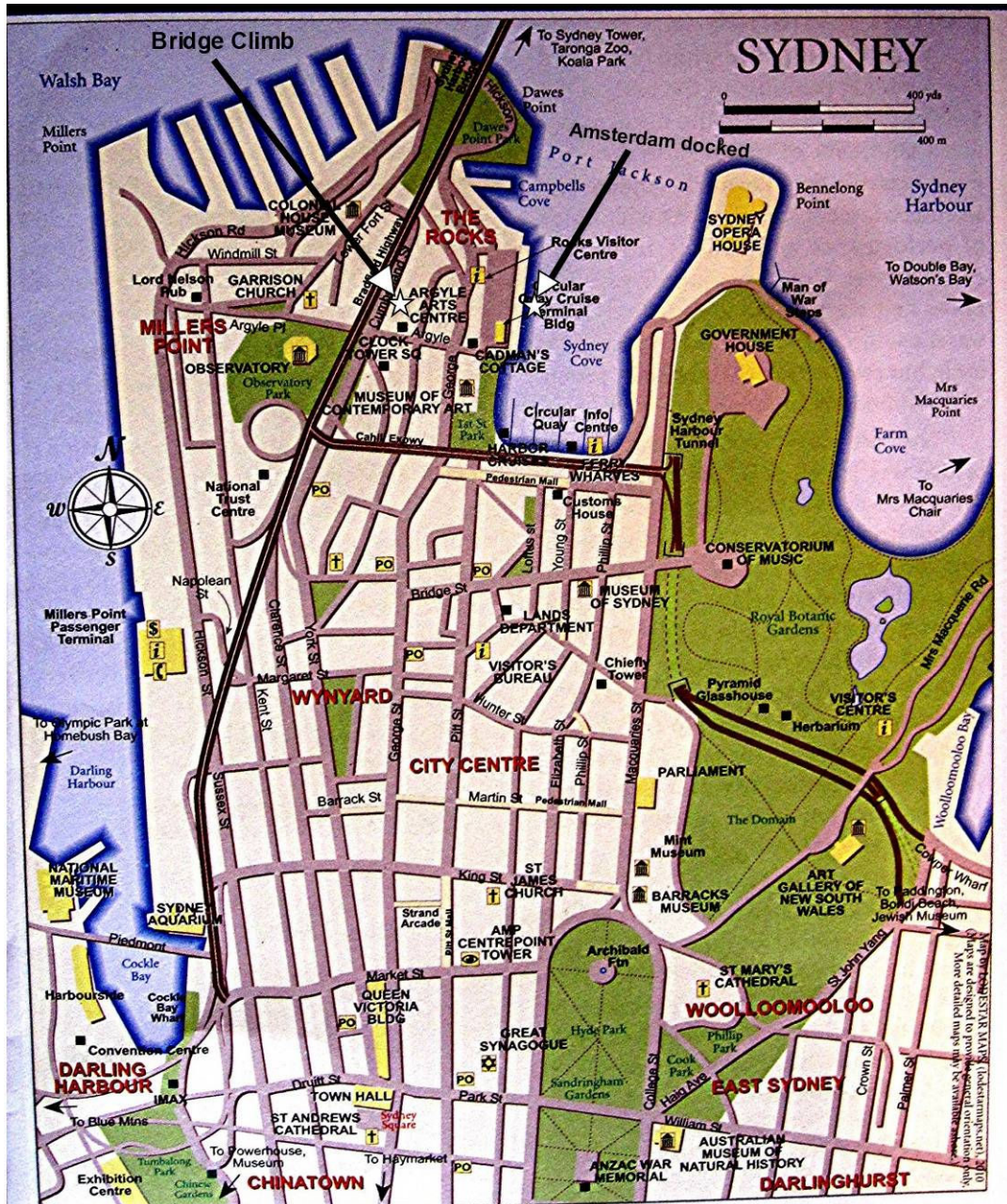


Day 37 – Sydney – Darling Harbour – Aquarium – The Rocks – 2 Nov. 09: The day started partly cloudy but it looked promising for a sunny day in Sydney. About 9am we started out on a hike to Darling Harbour across a part of Sydney we had not seen before. A map of Sydney is shown below.



Our route took us past Cadman's Cottage on Circular Quay and up Argyle Street. We passed under the highway approach to the Harbour Bridge and then took a left into the Observatory Park.

The Sydney Observatory was closed to visitors but we got a picture of it through the fence as shown on the right. On a Harbour Cruise yesterday we learned that the observatory was built early in Sydney's history to chart the sky of the Southern Hemisphere which was not well known to Europeans.



Surrounding the observatory was a spacious park with huge trees providing lots of shade, as shown in the picture below.



We were also greeted by colorful displays of Jacaranda blooms and hibiscus flowers. Those beauties are shown below.



So far we have survived the challenge of surviving as a pedestrian in a left hand traffic system. The primary hazard comes when you step off the curb where there is no traffic light. Then one must take a moment to consider which direction the cars are coming from. The larger cities, like Sydney, have painted warnings on the street for the tourists telling them which way to look for the oncoming traffic. We found a few of them this morning like the ones shown below.



We passed by the Ibis Hotel, as shown on the right. Before this cruise we had thought the Ibis bird was only found in Egypt but now we know they have large numbers in at least the Australian cities of Brisbane and Sydney. If Las Vegas can have a Flamingo Hotel then Sydney can certainly have an Ibis Hotel.



We finally finished walking down the fairly steep streets from the Observatory to the water's edge at Darling Harbour. There we found the Sydney

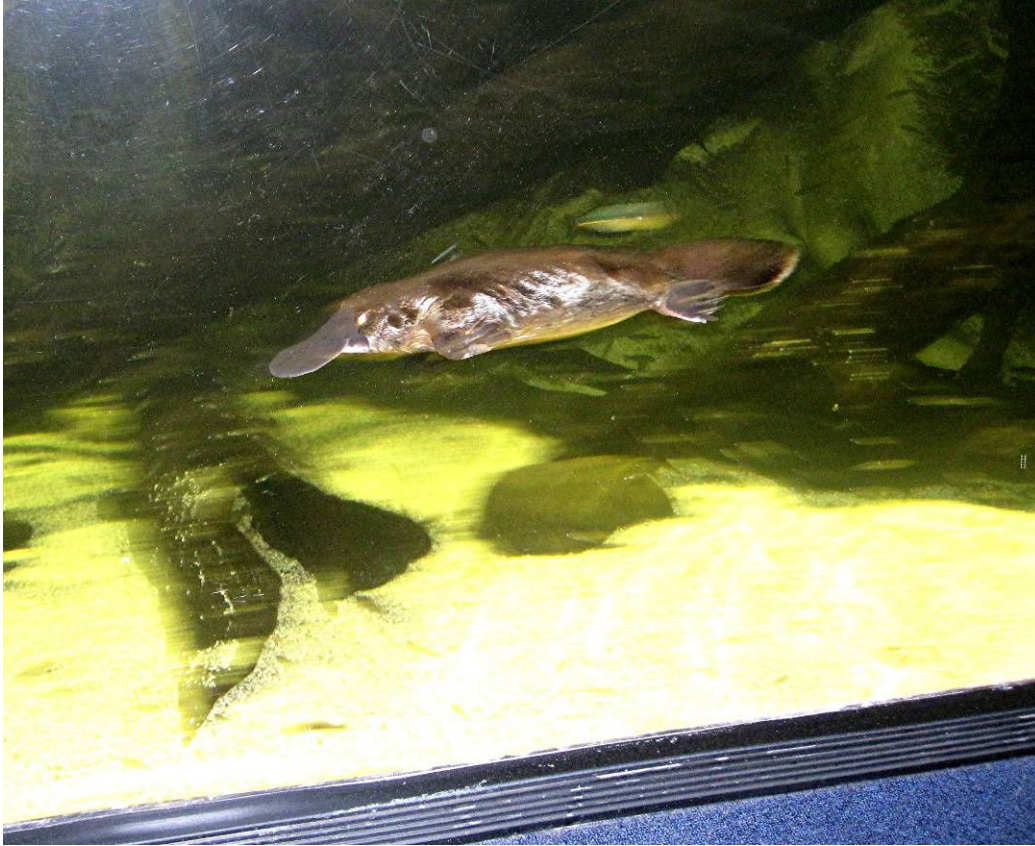


WildlifeWorld and the Aquarium. This apparently was a big field trip day for local school children. They were out in force in their uniforms. A large group was lined up to get into the WildlifeWorld, as shown on the left.

Sydney Aquarium: We were more interested in the Aquarium so we went in to the box office and bought two senior tickets (\$22.50 AUD).



The first exhibit we saw was the Duckbilled Platypus. We were really glad to finally see a duckbilled platypus in the flesh after living our whole lives just seeing them in pictures. Luckily a couple of the little critters were very active and swimming back and forth in the pool that had a glass side viewing window. The best photo we got is shown below. At one point the Platypus, which was about 18 inches long, crawled out of the water for a moment but then quickly got back in the water before a photograph could be taken.



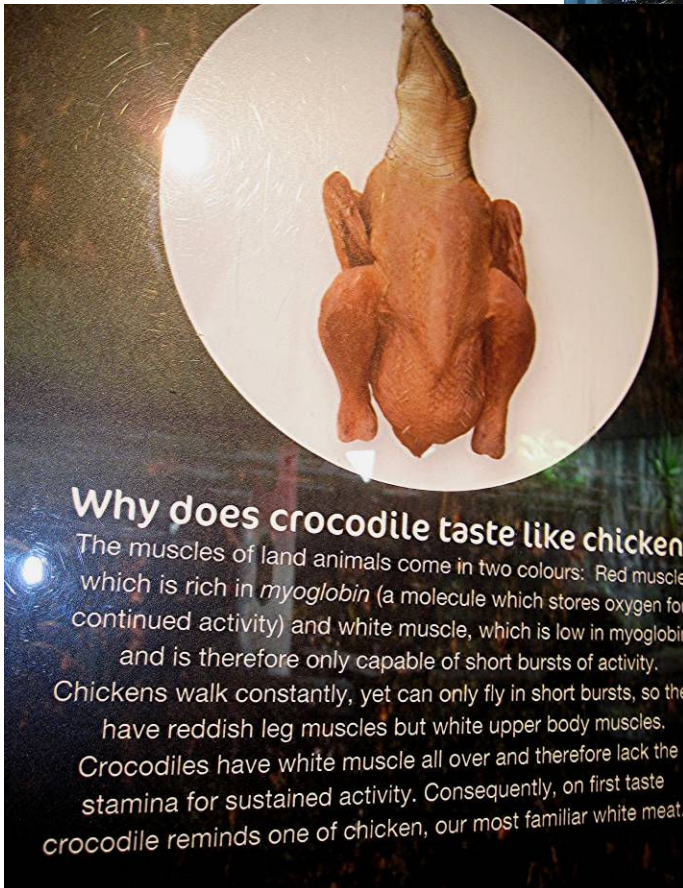
The exhibit was nicely decorated with Aboriginal type artwork, as shown on the left, probably to emphasize that the Platypus is unique to Australia. Nearby was a wall sign giving a lot of details about the physical features of a Duckbill Platypus, as shown on the right.



Crocodiles were the next aquatic animal on the path through the aquarium. In this exhibit there was a learning tool with advice on how to tell the difference between an alligator and a crocodile, as shown below.



The easiest rule to remember was that if you look at the animal with its mouth closed and you can see both the upper



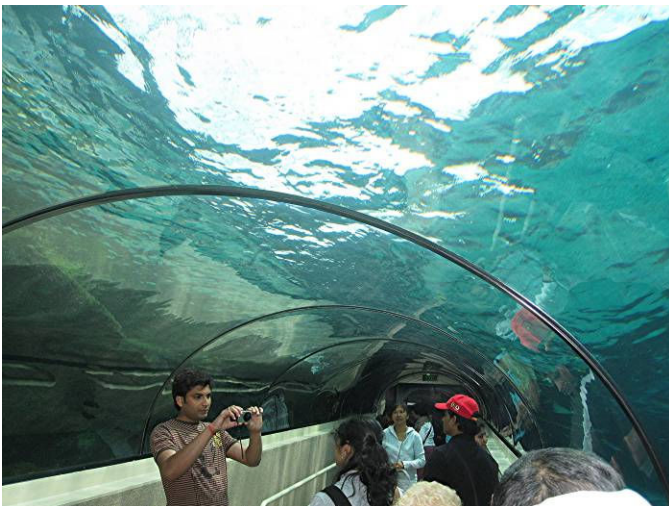
and lower teeth then you are looking at a crocodile. If only the upper teeth show then you are looking at an alligator.

Also, as shown on the left, was this helpful explanation of why the crocodile meat that you eat tastes like chicken. Perhaps this also answers the question we frequently have about the taste of lizard.

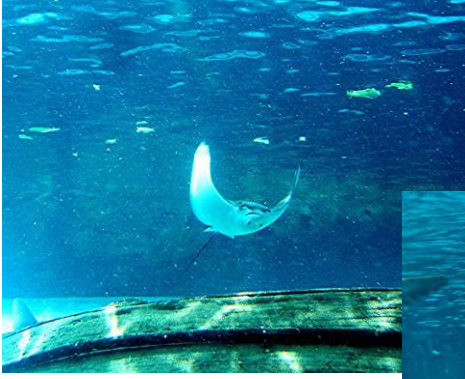
There was an exhibit of baby penguins showing the little guys both frolicking in the frigid water and on land, as shown below.



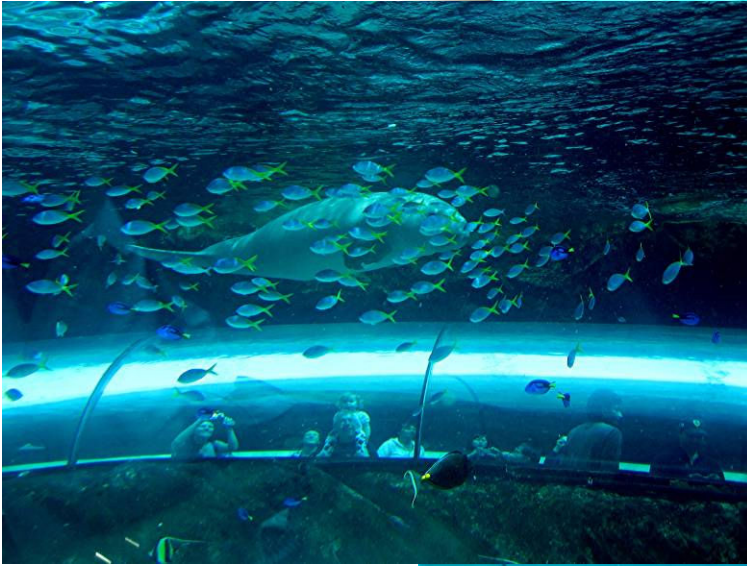
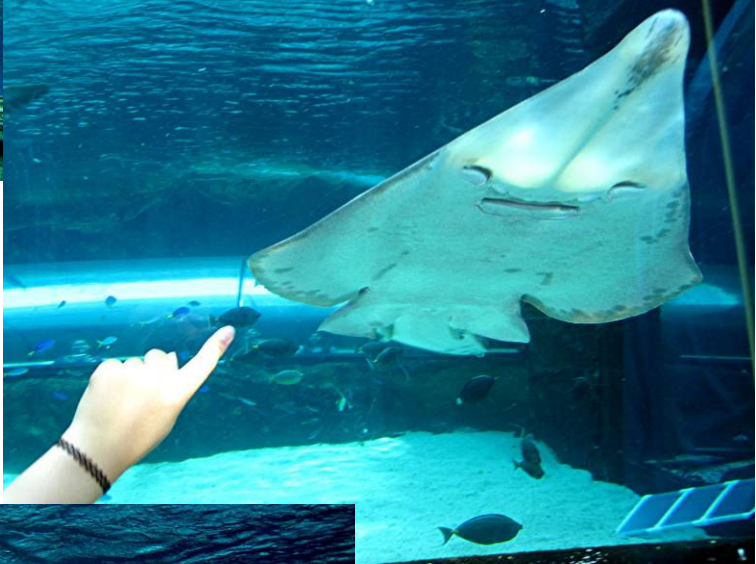
We went on to an exhibit of manatees, sharks, rays and many small fish swimming in a large pool with glass observation tunnels under the surface that we could walk through. Here is what it looked like from the inside of the tunnel, as shown on the left. We took many pictures through the glass with varying success.



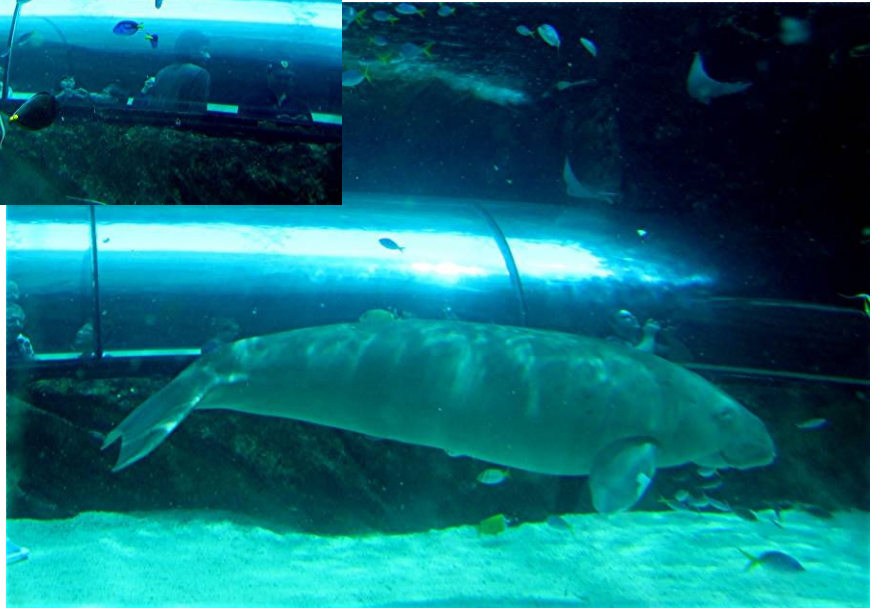
A few of the better shots are shown in the following pictures.

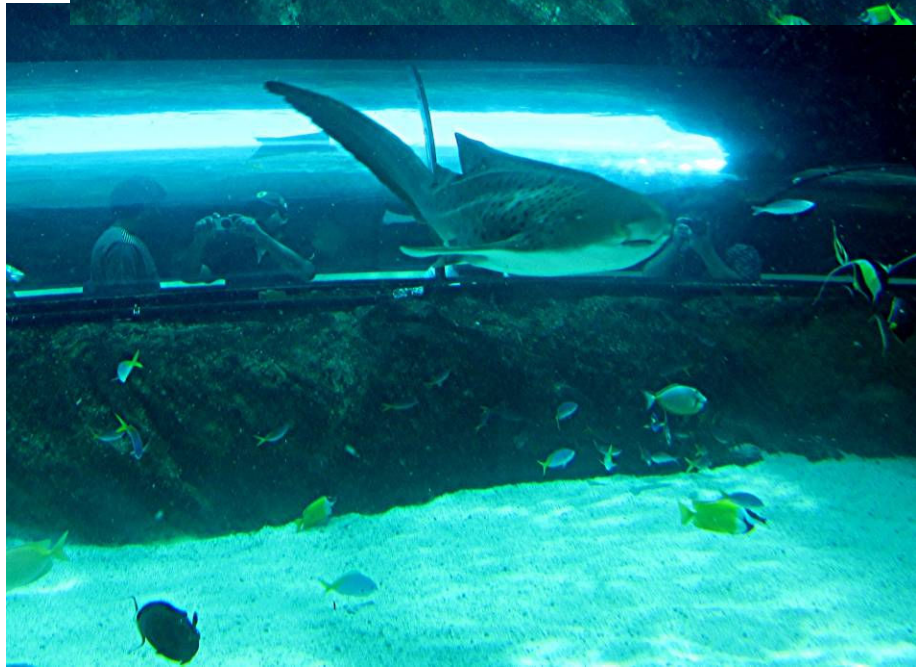
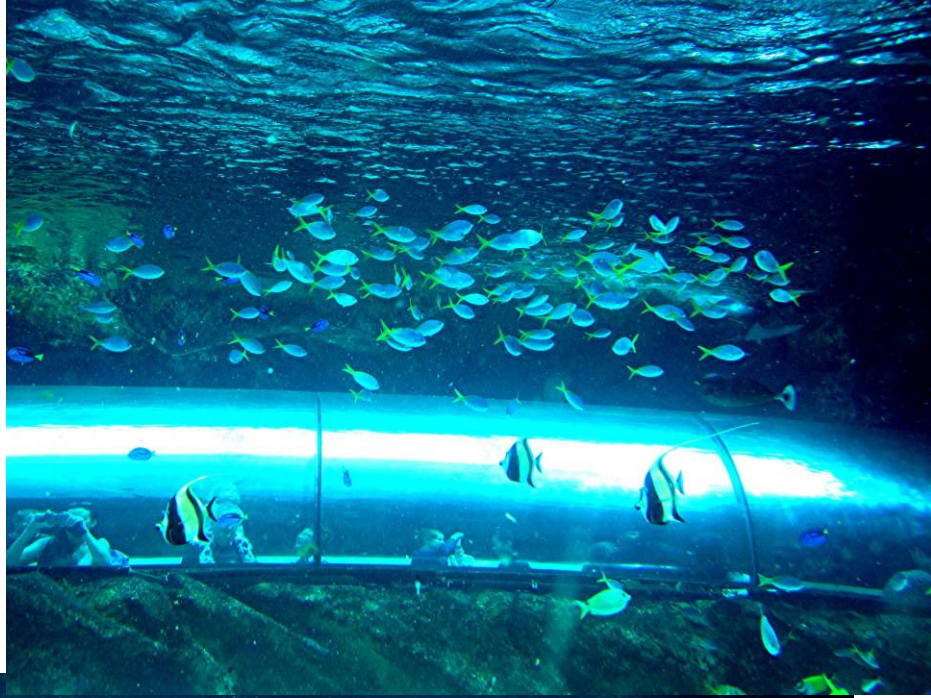


Rays



Manatee





Sharks



The following fish were in smaller tanks. We don't know what they are but show them here just because they are beautiful.



Pot Bellied Seahorse



Clown Fish, Finding Nemo type.



Reef fish



We are not experts in aquariums but after spending some time in the Sydney Aquarium we would give it high mar

After going through the aquarium we just strolled down the wide plaza fronting the waterfront of Darling Harbor. We came upon this fountain ringed with brass flamingoes, as shown on the right.



There was a sidewalk restaurant nearby so we stopped for lunch. At one point Orlin broke out the street maps and we began to plot the route for the rest of the day. In this photo on the left, “Mapboy” is pondering the next move.



We were in our third day of pretty heavy duty walking and touring so we decided to forego the walk back to Circular Quay in favor of a ferry boat ride with Captain Cook. We bought tickets at the Captain Cook booth in Darling Harbour and gladly climbed

aboard this boat that whisked us to Circular Quay and this Opera House view. As an aside, note the two other ferry boats in the picture. This image is a fair representation of the intense ferry boat traffic in and out of Circular Quay on any day.

The Rocks: We didn't have to be back on board the Amsterdam until 6pm for the sail away so we decided to visit some of the restored areas of The Rocks historical district. We had walked quickly through the area on the way to the BridgeClimb two days ago but now we had time to linger. We found this brass plaque, on the right that explained how The Rocks of Sydney was almost torn down and covered with high rise buildings. Fortunately, in 1971 the decision was made to preserve The Rocks as a Historical District.



We walked away from Circular Quay on Argyle Street. We turned right into The Rocks area at Argyle Terrace. The brick buildings at the north end of the street have a sign indicating they were built in the

1875-1877 time period, as shown above.

Argyle Terrace is a busy commercial area now, as shown on the right.



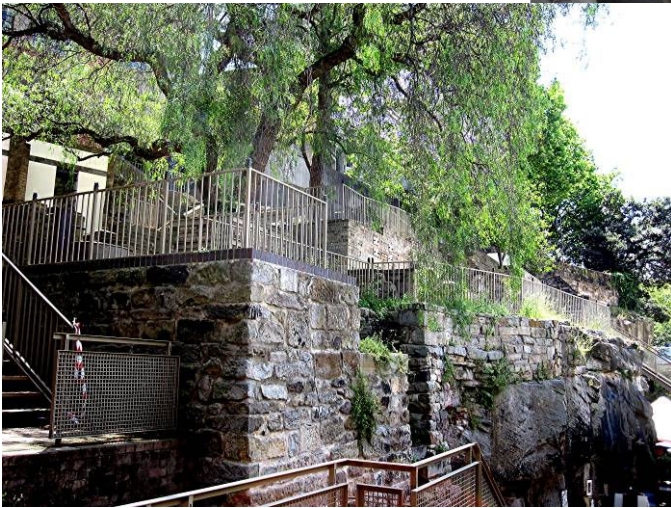


The Argyle Terrace buildings have narrow passageways built into them that allow pedestrians to pass through to the back yards and what used to be living quarters. Here is one of the passageways on the left. A plaque posted above the doorway identifies the passageway as a project of the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority, as shown below.

Our Cruise Critic and cruising friends, Jack and Evelyn (itravel2much), showed us these passageways when we were here in 2008. This was their shortcut to the BridgeClimb that we did with them.



Going through the passageway takes you from a busy commercial street to the “backyard” where the bare sandstone rock of The Rocks is exposed. The rock was excavated by the early convicts and settlers to make cave-like structures which formed part of their living quarters. A view of this area of The Rocks is shown on the right. Today a local artist uses one of the caves as part of his studio.



Above the caves, the sandstone bedrock of the hillside was terraced and some rockwork, as shown on the left, was put in place as foundation for long gone wooden houses that were constructed.

Some homes made of stone blocks have been preserved as part of this historical effort.



The brick fireplace is all that remains of this settler's home on the right. The shade umbrellas of a restaurant on Argyle Terrace can be seen below.



We left this area of early Sydney home construction and went back on to Argyle Terrace. At the end of the street, where it intersects with Playfair Street, we found the little metal statue of a dog with a plaque giving the name of Biggles (1980-1994) with the caption "A Loved Friend of the Rocks".

We don't know the story behind this little dog called Biggles but it could probably be uncovered if a person spent some time in The Rocks. Meanwhile we will just consider him "The Dog of Sydney" for purposes of our "Dog of the Cruise" series.

It was a short walk from The Rocks back to the Amsterdam. Once on board we relaxed and got ready for dinner at 5:30pm. The sail away through Sydney Harbour was scheduled for 6pm and we were hoping we could finish dinner in time to go up on deck to enjoy at least a part of the passing harbor. We got a break when Captain Eversen came on the PA system and said that the Port Authority would not allow the Amsterdam to get underway until 6:30pm because an earlier departure would interfere too much with the heavy ferry boat traffic in and out of Circular Quay.

Not to shortchange the dinner hour, Barbara took pictures of her plates for our foodie friends.



This appetizer on the left was called “Sea Food Stew in a Puff Pastry”.

Her main dish was steamed King Crab Legs.



We finished dinner and were out on deck when the Amsterdam finally got underway from the berth at Circular Quay. The sun was setting, which presented a lighting problem, on the dock but we were able to get this photo on the right showing that a few Sydney folks came down to see us off.



There were also a lot of people lined up on the terrace of the Opera House as we sailed away.



Proceeding through the harbor on the way to the entrance there was a lot of sailboat traffic. At one point the Amsterdam sounded an extremely long blast of the main horn. Shortly after the horn blast a fleet of sailboats came squirting out from around the bow. Apparently there was no collision and the picture we got is shown on the right.



There is nothing like a little Aussie excitement for the skipper as a memento of Sydney.

We made it safely past the north and south headlands of Sydney Harbour to the open ocean. The sea was fairly smooth and we sailed southward toward our next port of call, Melbourne, Australia. Tomorrow is a day at sea and we are looking forward to a little rest from the activity of the last three days in Sydney.