

Day 36 – Sydney–Botanical Gardens–Harbour Cruise–QVB–Pitt Street–1 Nov. 09:

The day started with broken clouds but soon turned into a bright sunshine filled morning. This was our second day in Sydney and we planned to walk through the Botanical Gardens and then take a tour of Sydney Harbour.

We set out walking to the Royal Botanical Gardens about 9am. The Gardens were only a 10 minute walk from the where the Amsterdam was docked. One entrance to the Botanical Gardens is well marked with flags at the waters edge and adjacent to the plaza of the Sydney Opera House, as shown on the right.

Although the emphasis of the Gardens is plant life we were intrigued by an artistic arrangement of sandstone carvings arranged in one of the open fields as shown below.



In the background of the picture two ladies can be seen. They explained that the elaborately carved stones were found during excavation of a nearby old waste landfill. The stone was debris from early buildings that were dismantled to make room for new buildings in Sydney. When they were discovered in the land fill

The Parks Department decided the artistic nature of the fragments was too good to be discarded again so they were put to use in the display we were seeing this bright cheery morning. It was pleasing to see the work of those early stone masons put on display rather than buried in a landfill.

We walked a short distance to another open field where we saw some large white birds known as Sulfur Crested Cockatoos. We had seen some at a distance when we took the Skyrail over the rain forest near Cairns but now we could see them up close. They were flying around with their head crests open which was quite striking. However, when they landed they retracted the crest like this one that can be seen on the right.





There were many types of Eucalyptus trees growing in the Garden. The one in the photo on the left got our attention because of the beautifully shaped trunk.

There was also this nicely shaped collection of palms.

We had been surprised to see Ibis birds in Brisbane a few days ago but they were to be found in great numbers here in the Botanical Garden, as shown in the photos below.



Walking through such a wonderful park on a beautiful day was a really joyful experience. This picture on the right showing the shiny angular skyline of Sydney framed by the magnificent trees of the Botanical Gardens made our walk in the Botanical Gardens this morning a truly memorable part of our visit to Sydney.



We passed through the entrance to the park at the Sydney Opera House and noticed that there was an open air market in progress on the plaza of the Opera House.

This is a tradition that is played out every Sunday in Sydney.



We browsed through the stalls which were filled with clothing and jewelry items that seemed to be a bit better quality than we typically see in these venues. In one of the displays there was a sterling silver pendant that

caught Barbara's eye. After talking with the artist, Sergio de Gravisi, and his wife for a while and toying with the pendant we decided to buy it. We then got the



traditional picture of the item with the artist as shown above.



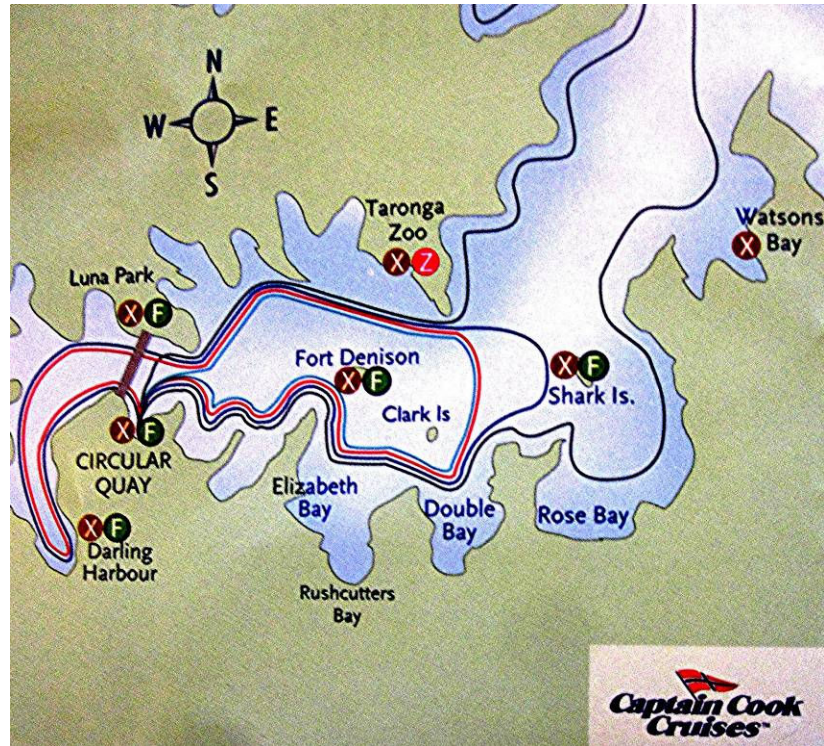
By this time it was about 10am so we decided to take a Sydney harbor cruise before lunch. We bought tickets for a 1 hour 15 minute cruise at the Captain Cook Cruises booth at Circular Quay. After a few minutes wait we boarded our cruise ship shown on the left.

The Sydney Harbour route for the 1 hour 15 minute cruise is shown as the red line in the map on the right.

We found a convenient spot to sit on the top deck so that there were no obstructions for our camera.

The picture below shows the top deck and thankfully a small number of passengers at this early hour of the day. However, we did meet an interesting

couple from South Africa who had a stuffed doll of Kermit the Frog of Muppets fame. They were taking pictures of it in foreign cities much like Barbara does her library card. Apparently, the photos are posted on a website called www.kermitsdiary.com.



There was a running commentary that kept us informed about what was passing by. Leaving Circular Quay we turned right and passed Fort Denison which is a small rock outcropping with a few stone buildings that were part of the Fort. A picture of this prominent but small island in the harbor is shown on the right.

The people of Sydney appreciate and use their harbor extensively for sailing. We got some beautiful views of sail boats in the harbor as we cruised today. An example of the view looking back at Sydney Harbour Bridge is shown below. Just this view made the trip worthwhile.



After circling around Clark Island we sailed past the Taronga Zoo on the north shore of the harbor. About all we could see of the zoo was the pointed roofs and cable car that takes visitors to the upper level, as shown in the picture on the right.



The cruise then took us westward and under the Harbour Bridge. We passed by the amusement center known as Luna Park. It has a happy looking face at the entrance that is large enough to be seen from the Amsterdam docked in Circular Quay. Here is a picture of it on the left.

The cruise ship then turned in to Darling Harbour which is the location of many tourist oriented activities in Sydney. The Aquarium, The Wildlife World Zoo, The National Maritime Museum and Convention Center are located in Darling Harbour. Also located there is a square rigger sailing ship that is a replica of the ship used by Captain Cook when he conducted his famous voyages of exploration in the 1700s. The replica of Captain Cook's ship is shown on the right.



Our cruise ship docked for a time in Darling Harbour to pickup a few passengers and let some off. We were close to the control console used by the Captain of our vessel and it was interesting to watch him manipulate the small control handles, as shown in the picture on the left.

While we were docked in Darling Harbour something happened that was completely unrelated to the cruise. We saw that an airplane was performing Sky-Writing above us. We hadn't seen Sky-Writing for decades and it was fun to watch it unfold. It took about 15 minutes for the message to get written but we finally got it before the wind blew it away. Here is the message shown below.



Apparently DH is a very romantic guy and knows how to impress Sora.

Our cruise ship got under way from Darling Harbour and in about 15 minutes took us back under the Harbour Bridge and into Circular Quay where we got off. We thoroughly enjoyed the cruise and the many sights we saw.

After leaving the Captain Cook Cruise we headed back to the Amsterdam to get some lunch. Along the way we were treated to the beautiful display of Jacaranda bloom on the trees that line Circular Quay. We have been so impressed with the flowers of the Sydney area and we have taken many pictures. This seems like a good place to slip in the photos that we have collected up to this time.



On the left, the rows of Jacaranda trees leading to the Amsterdam which is barely visible between the trees on the right. Below, some more Jacaranda blossoms.



Unknown but beautiful flower below.



Some kind of lily growing by a palm tree.



Kangaroo Paws, shown below.



As we approached the Cruise Terminal Building entrance we caught sight of our friends, Dick and Ann, who were waiting for some friends. We stopped and chatted for a

moment and then their friends Nereo and Kerry arrived. Nereo greeted us like old friends since he recognized us from reading our blog of the cruise. Dick and Ann had been visiting Nereo and Kerry who live in Australia. They were getting together for another day of visiting. They had been touring the Blue Mountains and it sounded like they had a glorious time. We couldn't let them go without getting a photo of this happy group with Barbara joining in. Left to right: Dick, Ann, Nereo, Kerry and Barbara.



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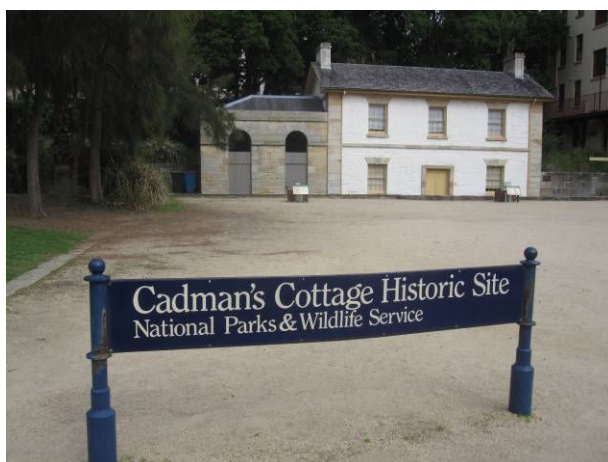
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After lunch we were wondering what to do with the rest of the day. There was a pile of literature from the Tourist Information Center on the table in our room so we started to go through it. One idea was to rent a car and drive around to some of the more remote spots of interest outside of Sydney. That was when this ad by the Wicked car rental company got our attention. It would appear that if you showed up naked at the sales counter, they would grant you a free day for the van you wanted. Then we noticed that since we are over 60 years old we could leave our clothes on and still get a free day. We weren't sure whether to be relieved or insulted. Well ----- we just assumed this was some ribald Aussie humor and besides that we didn't really need a rental van.

Instead, we decided to check out some sites around Circular Quay and then hike down George Street to the QVB (Queen Victoria Building) for our afternoon adventure.

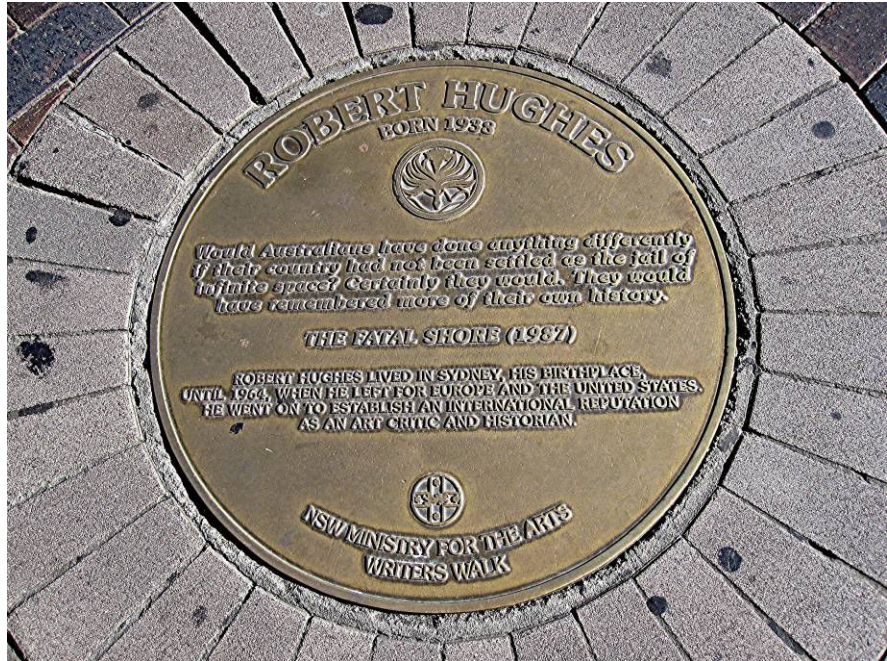


building which was the first one in Sydney with a proper English look.

Across the street from where the Amsterdam was docked there stands the oldest remaining building from the original Sydney settlement on the harbor shores. It is called Cadman's Cottage. It was built in 1816 with sandstone blocks taken from the sandstone bluff that the city is built on.

The interior has been left as close as possible to the conditions experienced by the original inhabitants. When it was built the city was very proud of this

As you walk along Circular Quay in Sydney you cannot help but notice large brass plaques embedded in the walkway. They have been placed there by the New South Wales Ministries for the Arts to honor authors who have touched Sydney in some way and made a contribution to society. The series of plaques is known as the Writers Walk. Before we took this cruise, Jean had recommended that we get a copy of “The Fatal Shore” written by Robert Hughes. We got it and read the history of how in the 1700s and early 1800s English prisoners were sent to Australia as punishment. Most of the original Europeans in Australia were these prisoners and their guards. Sydney and the Rocks area play a prominent role in that history. Reading the book certainly gave us a greater appreciation for the complex history of Australia. Sydney has honored Robert Hughes by placing his plaque in the walkway of Circular Quay for everyone to see. A photograph of the plaque is shown on the right. Hughes is just one of many famous authors recognized in this way.



From circular Quay you can get a good view of the Opera House as shown by this picture on the right.

We have been so blessed with good weather on this cruise. The air has been very clear while we have visited Australia but just this last September there was a terrible dust storm that carried dust into the coastal cities from the deserts in the



West. Today we took this picture of us with the Opera house in the background, glistening in the sun. We were able to get a picture taken of the Opera House during the dust storm and it is shown on the left for comparison.

Thank goodness that condition has improved and hopefully won't happen again.

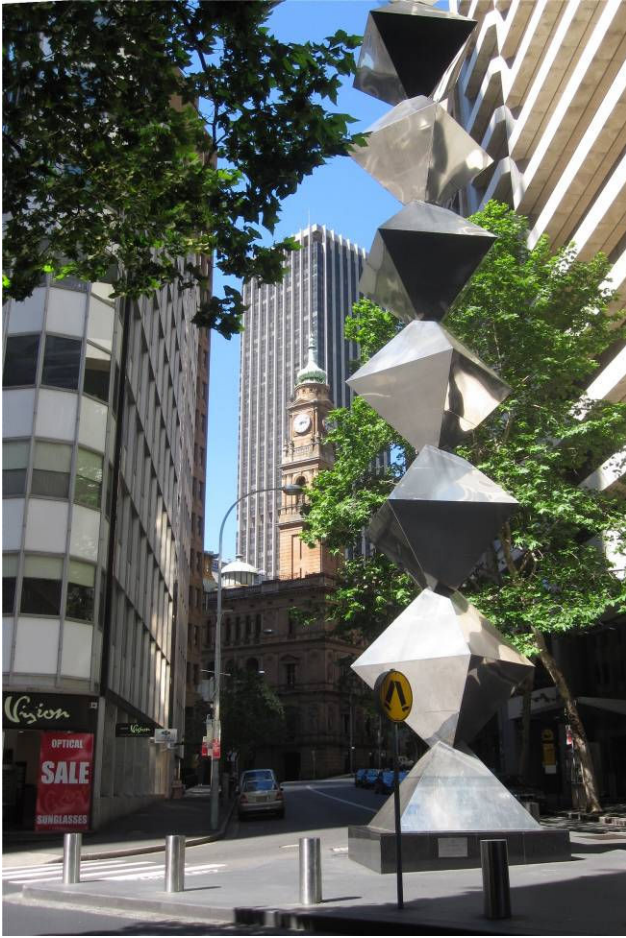
Our longer range plan for the afternoon included a leisurely sight seeing walk down George Street to the QVB (Queen Victoria Building) and return via Pitt Street. The QVB is one of our favorite buildings in Sydney. First of all it is built in Victorian style architecture with copper roofing that has a green patina of age. It takes up an entire block and houses an elegant mall with hundreds of fine stores on 3 different floors. This being the early part of November, Christmas decorating had started and we mainly wanted to see the QVB Christmas tree. We were pretty sure it would be in its usual place at the

center of the building and extending up for 3 floors. We were not disappointed. The tree completely filled the opening between floors in the central foyer of the building. The only way to photograph the tree is to stand back about 100 feet and take a photograph through the openings in all three floors. The photo on the right shows the best we could do in capturing the QVB Christmas tree this year.

We have taken a ton of pictures of the outside of the QVB in prior years so we didn't repeat that process this time. After looking around and satisfying ourselves that the Queen Victoria Building was just as gorgeous as ever, we headed out of the building and over a block to Pitt Street.



On Pitt Street we turned left and headed back towards Circular Quay. Some of Pitt Street is a pedestrian mall and that is always more enjoyable than conventional streets with the constant sound of traffic. We enjoyed the sights and sounds of Sydney, including sidewalk entertainers on Pitt Street.



A piece of modernistic art sculpture caught our eye because it was contrasted nicely with an old clock tower behind it. This picture on the left shows what we mean.

Sydney contains many of these combinations of old and new.

We completed our walk and returned to the Amsterdam for dinner. It was a full day so we turned in early. Tomorrow we plan to explore Darling Harbor and take in the Aquarium there.