



# SCOTTSDALE TOURS

## VICTORIA IN AUTUMN 2008

Well that was fun! Despite the fact that most of us were struck down by the 'bot' for a day or three, we managed to enjoy another wonderful trip. We covered around 2,600kms all up so we did a fair bit of sight-seeing between stops.

Of course a Scottsdale trip wouldn't be complete without the odd unexpected hiccup and creative, challenging recoveries and we had one or two of those. Firstly we again had to run the gauntlet of the dreaded Melbourne airport. It is such a nightmarish place these days that one can be forgiven for feeling a little anxious about going there. True to form we had delays coming through baggage claim and immigration which made us late for our date with 'Puffing Billy' but we did manage to get a shorter trip on this lovely old steam train so all was not lost.

The town of Bright is spectacular when it's almost Autumn so it must be pretty amazing when the full autumn colours are in bloom. It's no wonder this is where Victoria holds its autumn festival each year.

The cruise around the lakes at Lakes Entrance was great, the weather on the day was perfect. Less said about the accommodation though, the better eh. We went on to the Latrobe Valley next day and braved our way through a visit to a huge hydro station. Congratulations everyone for being brave enough to go all the way to the top of the towers and walk out over the see-through mesh flooring. The tour around the diggings was a real eye-opener too. A date with the wee fairy penguins that evening was a lovely way to end the day.

The drive down the coast to Sorrento was most enjoyable, the sea sparkled and the sun shone, a few degrees warmer than was really comfortable but we weren't complaining too much. The sea breeze on the boat trip across to Queenscliff was welcoming. Skenes Creek Motels was a new venue for us and a delightful surprise it was too. Doris, Andrew and Roger were hilarious hosts and had us in fits during our dinner. We will definitely have to return to this place.

The Great Ocean Road offered a plethora of interesting things for us to peruse. The Twelve Apostles and the fallen down London Bridge and their respective coastlines offered wonderful photo opportunities for the camera buffs. The tree-top walk was another interesting challenge and once again congratulations to those who took on the challenge and not only walked the walk ways – again on see-through mesh – but climbed the tower as well. Your age group makes our age group feel very humble that's for sure.



Ballarat was a mind blower, the old replica mining town on Sovereign Hill has to be seen to be believed. You can be forgiven for thinking you have stepped into a good old cowboy movie. The light and sound show later that evening just topped the bill and left us in awe of the amount of work and effort that has gone into producing such a spectacular show.

In Bendigo we got an insight into the town by traveling on the talking tram which was great fun. We followed this up with a leisurely dinner cruise on the

Murray River aboard the 'PS Canberra'. We were on the Goulburn River the very next day for a morning tea cruise this time, another lovely river outing in perfect weather.

Finally we completed our round trip back to Melbourne where we spent two nights in this huge metropolis with its wonderful old architecture. We were met with another challenge on our last night as the dinner on the tram was a no-go due to a mix up with the booking. However, being the creative person he is, Ross managed at the eleventh hour to drum up a trip up the Rialto Tower followed by a sumptuous buffet dinner at the largest casino we have ever seen.



I guess one of the highlights of the trip would have to be one of the unplanned excursions we made in search of some Macdonald ancestors gravesites way out in the middle of no-where. One of our dear travelers appeared to have the same Macdonald ancestry as Ross. So we traversed dirt roads and farm tracks in search of one such cemetery in a little spot on the map called Framlingham which was, believe it or not, on the Panmure – Ellerslie highway. We even had to take down a farmers rope fence at one stage so we could get through to the cemetery. The grass was thigh high and probably full of snakes but with all of us thrashing around in it I am sure the snakes would have been making a hasty departure. What we hadn't counted on was filling the bus with flies when we got back on board. Ross said the term 'fly cemetery' took on a new meaning as we spent the next hour swatting at flies on the windows. Alas we did not find the gravesites we were seeking but we had fun searching anyway.

Another of the highlights of this trip would have to be that we had four delightful ladies on board who had been close friends for 78 years. We were so impressed with these ladies that we contacted the Close-Up TV crew and suggested they might like to do a story on them. They agreed it would make a lovely story and we were met at the Auckland airport by a cameraman and a bright cheerful young interviewer. They decided that an interview with Mark Sainsbury would be even better so we will watch Close-Up with interest in the hope that one day these ladies will tell their story.

Thank you everyone for joining us on our Scottsdale adventure to Victoria.

*Ross & Susy*

