DIARY OF OUR SERVAS AND COUCHSURFING TRIP TO NEW ZEALAND AUSTRALIA SINGAPORE

> 18TH NOVEMBER 2013 TO 19TH FEBRUARY 2014

Manfred and Yvonne Car

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### Zusammenfassung

Wir waren seit unserer Studentenzeit in den 1970er Jahren "Servas"-Gastgeber und - Reisende. Auch bei unserem Arbeitsaufenthalt in der Republik Südafrika 1981 - 1983 hatten wir viele Servas Gastgeber kennengelernt, mit denen wir bis heute in Kontakt sind. Ziel unserer Reise nach Neuseeland, Australien und Singapur war es, alte Freunde aus dieser Zeit zu besuchen und neue Kontakte, sowohl über "Servas" als auch über die junge, auf dem Internet basierende Organisation "Couchsurfing".

Gemeinsam ist allen Menschen, die diese Art des Reisens bevorzugen, dass man die Länder, in unserem Fall als "Insider" kennenlernt. Wir lebten bei Familien, hörten über Alltagsprobleme und halfen auch gerne bei der Arbeit, wenn nötig.

Dieses Buch ist als Erinnerung an herrliche drei Monate gedacht und könnte auch heißen: **Ein Winter, der ein Sommer war!** 

Es soll dazu verleiten, diese neue Art des Reisens auszuprobieren. Es ist in Englisch verfasst, damit es auch von den über 30 Familien, die wir besucht haben, gelesen werden kann. DIARY OF OUR SERVAS AND COUCHSURFING TRIP TO NEW ZEALAND AUSTRALIA SINGAPORE

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## NEW ZEALAND - 18TH NOV. TO 17TH DEC. 2013

## Preface

Enjoying the unique possibility of travelling for three months during the nicest time of the year in the Southern Hemisphere - and the coldest months at home - we dedicate this little diary to all our friends having stayed at home, working hard - and to all those who have enabled us to get to know this wonderful part of the world in a way tourists normally cannot experience. These personal friends, SERVAS - and Couchsurfing - hosts who not only gave us every day their home to stay and sleep but also fed us, when we arrived tired often late in the evening, made this unique holiday not only possible but really enjoyable to us.

These personal experiences meant more to us than visiting important sights - hours of exchanging experiences and tales about everyday life let us learn so much about the country and its people(s).

New Zealand (NZ) is three times the size of Austria with half of it's population. So there is much room, and some mean even need, for more people to run the country economically - a good future and chance for young skilled labour to immigrate. NZ consists of the North- the South-, the Steward- and the Chatham-Islands. The North Island is in its extentions comparable to Austria, about 650 times 300 km. Good, but very curved roads, the speed limit of 100 km/h is controlled strictly and one really does not like to ride faster. We noticed that nearly all the road signs contain English words like "Railway Crossing" and in each curve the proposed speed is indicated accurately e.g." >>> 95".

This diary is kept in English to enable it being understood by our friends worldwide and as it had been our working language for many years (in South Africa, in Science and office) and as it has been the means of daily communication here for three months. This report is thought for us as a souvenir, when we grow old and forget easier and for you, as a hint if you want to visit this wonderful, for us Europeans quite remote corner of the world.

## Manfred and Yvonne



## Monday 18. 11. 2013:

06h25 Departure Brunn transfer by Bianca and Michi to terminal 1, we arrive at 6h50. Viki comes with us to the check-in, we have to use the machine before going to the terminal. Boarding cards are only available for the first flight to Frankfurt (Airbus 320).



09h05: Flight SQ2041 Wien - Frankfurt (Lufthansa) - Arr. 10h40 in time, we continue a long way of about 10 minutes to terminal 1,B 46, where we





get boarding cards to Singapore and from there to Auckland. We are lucky to sit in the upper deck of a new Airbus 380-800.

A strange EPISODE:

Waiting for boarding at the gate in Frankfurt I notice a woman about our age smiling when she catches a glance from me. When boarding starts I help her with her coat and ask where she is going. She answers: Bogota, Colombia, she works there at the Austrian Embassy. I tell her, that the husband of my cousin had worked there - she: "Is he called Conrad-Eybesfeld? I meet him and his wife this evening for dinner".

11h50:Flight SQ025 Frankfurt-Singapore: Very polite stewarts and very good service with any amount of free meals. We fly in the direction of Prague, pass southern Poland cross the Ukraine south of Kiew. At 15h10 (GMT) sunset at 15h30 we are south of Astrachan starting to fly across the Kaspian Sea. Here you see our arrival in Singapore, it was dark till nearly 7 o' clock. I had about 2 hours of sleep.

## Tuesday 19. 11. 2013

06h50: Arr. Singapore-Changi

Temperature 26 degr., free internet, so we can skype with Viki. Actually we feel quite good smelling the moist air and seeing palm trees surrounding the airport.

08h50: Flight SQ281, Seat 53A and B to Auckland (23h50 arrival): the funny thing was, that after one hour flight



was served - for us the second time, as in the first plane breakfast had been served at 4h30!

We sleep again about 21/2 hours, wake up seeing the red Australian desert below. Flying over Sydney one could even see the opera and the Harbour Bridge.



and Errol at the airport.

## 20th (0.15) till 24th Nov. staying with Errol and Hilda Nevill

After a warm welcome with a nice cup of tea (we had met Hilda in1983 and Errol in 1998 last time) we slept very well from 2 to 7h30!



Landing in Singapore



We arrive half an hour earlier at 23h15, but it takes us more than 50 minutes to pass the customs, at last we are happy to meet Hilda



**Wednesday 20. 11. 2013:** After a wonderful morning dog-walk with Zoe at the beach Errol and Hilda showed us the southern outskirts of Auck-land: By car to Howick, where we visited the old church and cemetary with a memorial to the soldiers who had died in the Maori war. We con-









Beach walking Maretai (right) Hilda 's garden Howick Church Vegetable cake Auckland from ferry





tinued to the nice beach of Maraetai (tea), via "The Woolshed", a tourist shop with local made souvenirs to Pukekohe, where Errol and Hilda had lived for 7 years (2004 - 2011). Below you see Hilda's wonderful dinner with a vegetable cake.

#### Thursday 21. 11. 2013:

Errol and Hilda bring us to the ferry leading to Auckland harbour. From there we proceed



to the Fish Market and enjoy a nice cup of "Flat White", which should become Manfred's favourite coffee in New Zealand.



**Friday 22. 11.:** We visit Carol, Errol and Hilda's doughter in Titirangi, Western Auckland, from there we continue to the Centennial Memorial Park (Errol explains us trees and we see the first Kauri, though infected) in the Waitakere ranges driving down to Piha Beach containing dark volcanic sand. Nice meal at Piha Beach North.







**Saturday 23. 11.:** Our last day in Auckland brings us to Devonport. After the usual morning dog-walk and a wonderful healthy breakfast we took the bus from Cockle Bay (Errol's house is situated 5 min. from the beach - and I have learned that cockles are shells you find at the beach, differently shaped as "pipis" and again distinguished from mussels, each of them edible, but they must only be collected in winter). to Brittonmart, the harbor station in Auckland. Devonport is a part of town on the opposite side of the bay with a wonderful view of the city.

Our general impression of NZ is incredibly positive. Thanks to the strong economical development of China, NZ is exporting especially dairy products.

## Sunday 24. 11. 2013

08h15: Start with Errol to Auckland Airport to fetch the car at Omega Car Rentals, start to **Alison Brown (Servas)** 

We leave Errol's and Hilda's house at 8h25, after getting the car, a Nissan Bluebird with 171 000 km, quickly (9h30), thanks to Errol's guidance we find our way easily following the road 20A South and taking the SH 1 North through Auckland crossing the Harbour Bridge. After about 100 km we arrive around 11h15 at Puhoi,



an old Bohemian settlement, very crowded because of the Sunday market. We are desperate, as we can't leave the car, the key can't be taken out of the lock - shit I think, that's the outcome of renting an old cheap car. Searching for a phone to call Omega car rentals, I ask an old man having a beer about my problem: He just said: "Shift the gearstick in "Parking Position" - yea, that's it! So you see, bloody Europeans have no experience driving cars with automatic transmissions.



After buying some typical cheese at Puhoi Dairy we had our packed lunch ("padkos" as Errol said) in the Puhoi nursery and

1863 Gaitanea in Gottes Nammu 2013

Bavarian-German inscription at the altar of Puhoi church: "Come closer in God's name"

went to the adjacent Bohemian Museum. In the 1840s farmers from northwestern Bohemia had fled the poor conditions to arrive in an densely overgrown area by river boats- in years of hard work they had to gain farming country. We continue to Warworth, where Hilda had recommended us a nice café at the river side, they do also steam boat cruises there Next stop were the Whangarei falls, 40 m high over basalt rocks. Next stop was Kawakawa where Hundertwasser had designed toilets with his students. At 6 p.m. we arrived in Pahia after 270 km and 4 hours of driving time (without sightseeing time).

Alison Brown living in a wonderful flat with seaview (frontview right top) had prepared a savery risotto and for Yvonne who dislikes sharp food a vegetable pie. She was born in Scotland and had seen much of Europe as a student. Now she works as a psychiatrist in Kaitaia and has to drive over 100 km each direction daily to her work. Many of her patients are Maori, so she could tell us a lot about Maori life. As she has to leave at 6h30, we got the keys and prepared breakfast ourselves.

#### Monday 25. 11. 2013:

We take the ferry to Russel, the old harbour and historic town in the Bay of Islands. There we ascend Flagstaff Hill, a good place for the view across the small islands. There the first British flag had been hoisted.

Afterwards we visited the French Pompellier Mission that had functioned only from 1838 till 1846, but had a printery that is still working. It was completely restored In the evening we prepared a meal for Alison, Broccoli soup, Pak Choi with roasted potoatoes and "Palatschinken" (Pan Cakes) as dessert. Below you see me with coffee called "Franz Josef" in the kitchen.

**Tuesday 26. 11. 2013:** It is the first rainy day, we write mails and skype with Martin, quite practical to know that the time shift is exactly 12 hours, so family has dinner, while we have breakfast. After packing, we fetch the car

Manfred with "Franz Josef" Coffee















from Alison's garage and proceed to Whaitangi, the town where the British signed a treaty with Maori leaders giving the rights of land ownership to Brttain The visitor centre is close to the famous assembly hall, decorated by some Maori tribes. Entry fees are between 25 \$ and 40 \$. As the sun comes out we rather look at the Huraki falls and go on to Kerikeri where we visit the replica of an original Maori village with herbal gardens where the plants used by Maoris were explained. We go on to Opononi with a stunning view of a big sand dune contrasting with the green hills covered with Kauri forests. The wind and spray from big waves rolling along the beach reminds us of the Namib desert joining the sea near Swakopmund.

The next 18 km we pass the Kauri forest park including New Zealand's largest Kauri tree seen at the opposite side. Over 50 m high, about 2000 years old, an impressive giant.

As cafés close at 4 p.m. in NZ, it's not easy to get coffee in time, so we have some water and a good goats cheese from Puhoi instead. Via Dargaville we continue 23 km south to Te



# Kopuru, Caroline Newick and Doug Butcher (Couchsurfing)

They are extremely nice couchsurfing hosts having farmed till May 2013 near the west coast of South Islands, not far from Arthur's Pass, before they bought this big farm (about 300 ha), where they have got about 270 cattle. Here dairy farming conditions are not so ideal as in the South Island, but farm prices often are less than half, so they saved lots of money by moving. They took 70 cattle with them, getting them "dry" before, so they don't have to be milked for the two days of travel.

We had a wonderful dinner, boiled eggs cut in halves with cheese on top and roasted potato pieces and slept in a wonderful room.





Wednesday 27. 11. 2013: In the morning I hurry down to the milkshed where Doug is busy milking 16 cows at once, while his daughter tries to shift the cowdung from the concrete floor into a pond. Caroline injects peni cilline to a sick calf. I get rubber boots and help pushing the dung, afterwards we get bags of food for the calfs to their pasture. After breakfast we leave for Dargaville and Baylys Beach. Dargaville is situated along a huge muddy river that in former time could be used by ships arriving from the sea, but now is too shallow. The museum shows the history of the Dalmatian gum diggers who had collected the resin of the Kauri trees. their rebuilt village can be seen below. From there we drove to the great Kauri Museum in Matakohe. 2 hours were nearly too short for visiting, even original saw mills for cutting Kauri are displayed and one room is dedicated to the biggest resin collection of the world. Kauri gum resembles very much amber, but seems to be more expensive nowadays. There is also a settler's museum included, one gets a good impression of the early life in these indigenous woods and how the first farms had been established. Heavy rain leads us to our next host, the farmers

## Grant and Glenda Blythen 2967 Paparoa (Couchsurfing)

We arrive at 5h30 pm and meet Grant who is sheep farmer, Glenda and Anna, the 17 year old daughter. Being very similar families (4 children each, they have got 3 daughters and one son) we immediately get on very well with each other. Anna finishes a Christian highschool (small school with only 50 children, different levels in one class) this year. Glenda knows Europe very well from former travels, they live in an old farmhouse dating from 1860, built of Kauri wood, the carved doors and the high rooms remind us of our house. It is the first time that we stay in a house older than 40 years. After a delicious dinner with a "Pawlowa", a typical New Zealand cake with Meringue along the outside we exchanged couchsurfing experiences and settled in our wonderful bed.







Τ7



Thursday 28. 11. 2013: We get up late, at 7h30, it had rained heavily during the night. After breakfast we had a look at the farm and Grant picked the sprouts of the Cabbage Tree which is found here everywhere. They are common food of the Maoris (fotos on the left). Afterwards we had to leave as the way to Rotorua is more than 300 km. Here a typical couchsurfing story: On Sat. 26th we got a mail from Caroline Newick, that they have to go to Auckland and we could stay only one night. So at 11 pm I wrote to 3 couchsurfing hosts on the way to Rotorua, whether we could stay for one night. Next morning we got an invitation from Glenda Blythen, that we are welcome and we announced our arrival time. Shortly afterwards positive answers arrived from the other two families - regretting we had to write, we could not come, but the Taiwanese family from

Auckland - State Highway 1-Harbour Bridge









pass by and have some tea with them. So we popped in at 2 pm, they showed us photos of their recent trip to the South Island and afterwards we went to Hamilton Gardens, beautiful landscape gardens of all parts of the world. In the Chinese garden we met three Malaysien students, who gave us hints, what we should visit on the stop over on our way back in Singapore.

Typical Trees (top to bottom) Pohutukawa (New Zealnd Christmas tree) Phytolaca dioica (right) Syringa Tree Silver Fern (a Tree Fern) Cabbage Tree Flame Tree (right)







Dinner with Shana & Mark

After 10 hours ride we arrive in Rotorua:

From 28th till 30th we stay with Shana CARLAN-RIDDELL (F) & Mark RIDDELL (Servas) Friday 29. 11. 2013: Yvonne`s 60th birthday!

We had a wonderful sleep after a fine dinner and nice talk with Shana, who as an art teacher has got wonderful paintings in the farmhouse built in lockwood technique. Mark farms young dairy cattle and works for the forest department as mathematician. We drive to Rotorua and visit the Ohinemutu village where Maoris still live in







typical houses with hot bubbling water in their gardens, a really mystic spot, the water is so hot, that you burn your skin, when you touch it. Along the coast we walk to the Sulphur Bay, where hot pools can be found along the shore of Rotorua Lake. The Museum in the old bath house is a highlight showing the origin of the Maori culture and giving information about the vulcanic surroundings of Rotorua. While the museum closed we quickly found a small birthday present for Yvonne, a ring with the spiral ("Koru"), a Maori symbol for eternity (so many happy returns!) on "Paua" a seashell. Below you see that our holiday is full of stress - every day we have to hurry to obtain the wonderful "Flat White" coffee and "English Breakfast Tea" as one of the coffee shops closed even at 3h30! The sign also shows that New Zealanders are proud of the Maori population and their language being the second official language (the 3rd is the "Sign Language"!) is used everywhere for welcoming and of course nearly all the place names are Maori. In the evening we prepared "Marillenknödel"- apricot dumplings.





awaking in the cosy farm house





Saturday 30. 11. 2013: After a small tour on the farm Shana invited us into the Paradise Valley Spring resort, where one can touch lion cubs and see indigenous animals and plants, like the Kakariki, the yellow crowned Parakeet (left below) - a unique birthday present for Yvonne. In the river rainbow trouts much larger than in Europe could be seen and enormous eels. At lunchtime we went on to Lake Taupo. In the whole area plenty of hot springs are found and at Taupo the heating and even electric power is produced from volcanic heat. Near the Huka Falls the remaining heat is used to breed freshwater







prawns. Taupo is a famous holiday resort, has got lots of shops but cannot be compared to European cities. The enormous round lake, a volcanic crater, had wild and stormy water as the afternoon was quite rainy. Because of the cooler climate Kauri trees are substituted by Redwood, but the main forest consists of Pinus radiata. A street painting shows the origin of the lake, below the big waves and the Motutaiko island can be seen. In the evening (7 pm) we had a warm welcome with a nice trout and salad dinner by our Servas hosts in Tauramanui.

## Izzi Macdonald and John (Couchsurfing)

John, who is Belgian told us about his work in the Canary Islands organising buses for tourist groups, after the meal we had a look at the glow worms living below fern trees. In the morning we admired the newly planted vegetable garden.

**Sunday 1. 12. 2013**: A wonderful sunny day, we start to the Tongariro National Park, the oldest in New Zealand and second in the world after Yellowstone. After fetching informations from Whakapapa, we started the walk









*typical mountain flora along the track: red tussock (right), daisy (next page)* 

to the Taranaki falls. Whakapapa is about 1300 m above sea level and inspite of the sunny weather we need jackets and pullover. Mt. Ruapehu, 2797 m high, holy to the Maoris is visible from everywhere, covered with snow. The visitor centre shows the history

of vulcanic eruptions, the last of which occured only recently and about plants and animals like the possum (be-









## WHAT TO DO!!

If there are any signs of an eruption (earthquakes, rumbling from crater, ash cloud or flying rocks):

Move out of valleys by removing your skis or board and climbing the valley sides to a ridge top

## HAZARDS

#### Summit Hazards

- Ruapehu is an active volcano;
- During an eruption there may be ash, gas and flying rocks on the upper mountain, especially within the Summit Hazard Zone.

The Summit Hazard Zone





low), which inspite of looking so cute destroys valuable forest. After the walk we took the road up to the skiing resort on the vulcano. A strange impression is given by the skiing lifts surrounded by dead dark vulcanic rocks without plants. Austria is represented in New Zealand mainly by Hundert wasser and Atomic skis which one can hire to go to the top of the vulcano - and - what a surprise a skiing hut is called "Arlberg". As the sign below says, they just started preparing the chair lifts. Swiss made and a bit old fashion looking - and of course - be careful, in case of an eruption move out of valleys (lava can be hot!).







## **Taumarunui to Wellington: 02. 12. - 04. 12. 2013:** Stay with the **SERVAS hosts Kelly Mara & O'KANE Patricia**

We started in Taumarunui at 9h30 after sending some e-mails in front of the public library (there you find free Wifi). Then we followed the road to Whanganui through scenic landscape, where we arrived at 11h30. We got a map at the civil council and very friendly information about a church with Maori decoration (which was closed). After a short break we followed the "highway" to Wellington. For many kilometers we were the only car on the road and after 5 hours of driving 360 km we arrived in the city centre of Wellington, at our new hosts Kelly, Patricia and their son Francis. We were immediately impressed by its architecture and the massive wood work doors made of Kauri, high rooms like at home. Kelly works in marketing for fruit companies and Patricia assessing the connection of architecture to living quality.

After arrival we returned our car at Omega car rentals, were brought back to the railway station, where I could take first photos of a working train service (!), there are even some suburban trains, they look quite like those in London (only the gauge is narrower)! We walked through the harbour



experiencing problems in finding a café within all the posh bistros. As everywhere there is a heliport for flights with aerial views. The harbour is used for many kinds of sports after work, one sees long canues, surf boards with completely dressed up people standing on them and even swimmers. Everyone knows the kiwi as kind of national fruit of NZ (though





Map of our route through the South Island of New Zealand: After a 50 minute flight from Wellington, capital of NZ we started at Christchurch, capital of the South Island (A), crossed the Southern Alps via Arthur's Pass to Kumara (B), where we stayed 3 nights, daytrip to Greymouth (C), went via Haast (D) to Clyde (E) where we stayed 2 nights, continued via Queenstown (F) to Te Anau (G) where we stayed 2 nights, continued to Invercargill (H), where we stayed 2 nights, Dunedin via the Catlins (2 nights) and finished in Christchurch (A), where we stayed 2 nights to fly on Dec. 17th to Melbourne, Australia.

The South West side of the island is hard to access because of high mountains and deep "sounds", a landscape similar to Norwegian Fjords. The southern most island is Steward Island, only 50 km from Invercargill. It is mainly a National Park accessible only via 28 km of roads and many walking tracks. It is the best place to watch Kiwis.

originating from China), but the original first fruit cultivated was the "kumara" also called sweet potato, one finds several kinds of it in the supermarkets. It's interesting that the settling of the Maori population has to do with the possibility to grow kumara, which they originally brought from their pacific islands. So at the South Island, where kumara does





not grow, there live fewer Maori. In the evening after dinner Kelly, Patricia and the other Servas guest, Julie from Canada went with us up Victoria hill, where











Kelly and Patricia's house







Christchurch Rose Garden

we had a good view of the town, the ferries going out via Cook Strait to the South Island and the airport.

On **December 3rd** we visited the Te Papa National Museum in Wellington and afterwards went up to the Botanical Garden by cable car. In the evening we prepared soup and apricot dumplings for our hosts. Manfred was helped by Julie Aho who stayed at the same time as we with Kelly and Patricia. Afterwards Francis showed us in his garage how to construct "Longboards" from compound wood glued with help of vacuum.

In the morning of Dec. 4th they brought us to Wellington Airport, where we felt very comfortable arriving one hour in advance and catching the inland flight to Christchurch by Jet Airways. Stunning were the decorations with sculptures from Hobbit films.

**Christchurch Airport** seemed very quiet too, a nice bus driver phoned Omega Car rentals for us and we were brought to the nearby office, where the clean





Christchurch welcomes travellers advertising that the South Island has got much more space (top left) Wellington calls itself "Centre of Middle Earth", below: decoration of shopping area of Wellington airport.



and new looking Mazda Demio waited (it has got 110 000 km though). We drove directly highway 73, "the great alpine drive" towards Springfield, where the ascent to Arthur's Pass starts. Hoping to see the "Tranzalp" we looked at Springfield Railway Station, which was empty but even had a café (photo below left). First stop was Castle Hill, characterised









by big natural limestone sculptures. In a nearby farm pond we discovered the white flowers of an aquatic Ranunculus (left). Next stop was the Cave Stream Reserve, where one could walk albout 400 m along a subterranean stream, we just had a look at the cave exit (above). Before getting to the pass we had a coffee at Arthur's Pass Information Centre and took a photo of "our family cottage" (left). On Arthur's Pass (930 m) we did the Dobson Walk with many alpine flowers to be seen at this time of the year (e.g. the white mountain lily which is the biggest Ranunculus (photo left with Yvonne).





The blue lupine in foreground seems to be the same we have got in Europe. On the West side of Arthur's Pass the descent was very dangerous and steep till the modern road with bridges crossing the deep gorges had been built. In the evening we arrived in

## Kumara: 4. 12. - 7. 12. 2013, where we stayed with Prue and Chris Bowen (Couchsurfing)

Chris and her three year old son William, two dogs and three cats welcomed us and we had a good vegetarian lasagne. Chris studied ecotourism, is a chef and teaches at the local school at the moment, Prue did farming in Australia, owned a hotel in Kumara and works at the moment in the "Warehouse" in Greymouth. Her partner is a gold digger and so she told us how gold still can be found, a practical experience we made the following day. Below you see the family, our room, the house with the dogs and a typical old Kumara house.

On Dec. 5th we went to Hokitika museum, where the history of the area is explained very well. From there we drove to the Punakaiki Reserve











north of Greymouth to see the "pancake rocks". On the way to Greymouth we passed a one way bridge, which not only had one lane but this one also combined with a rail track - for us an unusual experience (photo on bottom of page)!

Dec. 6th we took the Stafford Loop Rd. east of Kumara to the river, where at a caravan parking spot (Gold Borough) pans are provided for everyone to look for gold in the river. Of course we gave it a try without finding a nugget. On the way back to the car a gold seeker, staying in a







caravan offered us his spade and gave us hints, where to find gold (you must dig till the blue clay and wash the sand close to the clay ...). he showed us his findings of the last days and explained, that these nuggets contained 98% gold whereas gold fields on the other side of the mountain near Queenstown contained only 47%. Alas, we didn't accept his offer as we wanted to walk the gold diggers trail in Ross, south of Hokitika. There an old hotel and shop from the 19th century is preserved and a path along the old water races leads to a gold digger's cottage and the old cemetery. The tombstones tell the history, where the diggers came from ("native of Ireland") and why they died ("was drowned in the Waitaha river aged 35"). Men and machinery came through the Hokitika harbour, where a monument records the stranded boats (left). Hokitika is a nice little town with many Greenstone (Jade) factories. They carve old Maori symbols, as greenstone is



a holy stone for the Maoris. It is found in most Westcoast rivers.



Kumara to Clyde along the Westcoast passing Franz Joseph- and Fox-Glaciers, 07. 12.: We visit Anne Dougherty (Couchsurfing)

After a quick breakfast, Prue and Chris got up early to say good bye, we startet at 6h30 via Hokitika and Ross to Franz Josef (160 km from Kumara), where the weather was so bad, that we couldn't leave the car, so we drove on to Fox Glacier. We were lucky and could walk to a view point without rain. Glaciers in NZ reach nearly sea level and it is stunning to see the subtropical flora quite close to the glacier. While making a detour on a gravel road to a gold digging place at Gillespies beach (next page top) we heared funny noises - a puncture of one small 14" tyre of our little Mazda.

Photos: Map of the two big glaciers: Franz Josef was named by the German geologist Julius von Haast shortly after Franz Joseph became emperor of Austria, below: the Fox Glacier which can be seen best from about 10 km distance.











Above: the famous "sandfly" Austrosimulium biting



With the help of the first driver passing by I fixed the spare wheel, which, like often in modern cars, was rather a toy wheel. We managed to get to the garage in Fox village, where a funny mechanic (he pretended not to understand and disappeared for 15 minutes, when I wanted to fetch the car - for payment he commented, my "German Visa Card" won't function anyway).So we continued to Haast, where the road runs along the Haast river (see map at bottom side) and up the Haast Pass (560 m). South of the pass the landscape changes from rough limestone to the high plains and more gentle schist mountains of Central Otago. Also the weather changed from strong rain to a sunny evening along the long lakes Wanaka and Hawea. Around Cromwell we passed many fruit growing farms crossed the bridge in Cromwell to drive along lake Clyde to the historical town of Clyde. We had driven 590 km in more than 13 hours including breaks. Ann Dougherty waited for us with a fine dinner of chicken with vegetables.

Machinery for extracting gold from sea sand. Sandfly (Austrosimulium ungulatum) biting, waves at the West Coast. Road from Haast to the pass (top left to right) and to Lakes Wanaka and Hawea.
Dec. 8th: After an exhausting day of travelling we relaxed and followed Anne's advice to visit Mitchell's cottage, an outstanding example of 19th century stone masonry. It was contructed by a Scottish family looking for gold within 20 years and afterwards used for farming. The schist rocks, the windy and rainy day let us really feel like in Scotland. At a neighbouring farm I picked elder flowers for Anne to prepare a syrup. Afterwards we had a nice tea at Alexandra (below right). In the afternoon we visited the three Museums of Clyde, which calls itself a museum town. There is even a technical museum in the















vintage railway station which is the final point of the Otago Rail Cycleway. The old town hall is now the club room of the Free Masons. In the area we noticed Free Masons meeting halls in some towns. Look at the funny explanation, how to turn on the electric light on the left! From Clyde a very scenic drive through fruit and wine growing country brought us via Cromwell to Arrowtown. The main street is lined by scenic old houses, below you see the Post Office. Along the river the Chinese gold digger settlement is preserved (Manfred in front of a small digger's home).



Gold nuggets found in the area are sold as jewellery. From there it is not far to Queenstown, crowded with tourists longing for walks in the mountains or being on their way to the "sounds". Its cableway, the steamboat built 1912 travelling all year round on lake Wakatipu, the beach with a café in a 19th century bath house make it similar to great tourist towns in Europe like St. Moritz.

We had our healthy packed lunch watching the steam boat and a walk in the public gardens. A scenic road goes along the lake to Kingston, where till recently steam trains with two engines and green passenger carriages were in use. But alas the investor has closed down the line. Passing lots of sheep farms we arrived at 7 pm in:

# TE ANAU 9. 12. - 11. 12. 2013: Des "Te Anau" (Couchsurfing)

Des though looking very "indigenous" is only 1/8th Maori, but seems to have inherited their sense for spirituality, for feeling how to live in a natural way, knowing "sacred" places in his surrounding. Besides his wide range of music and interesting discussions made the stay and work in his kitchen very pleasant. On this point the construction of the average NZ home should be shown. On a concrete surface wood-





Tussock plains, Tussock grass (right)

en frames about 12 cm wide are screwed, the outside is covered with a plastified tissue and usually without insulation both sides are covered with big plates. Windows nearly everywhere are made of single glass, only new houses need insulation glass. This fact is astonishing as temperatures in some areas can be very cold in winter and it is very windy at all times. Des worked with problematic young people and taught them the ancient art of flax weaving. He showed us how to split the leaves with a dog's comb, how to soften them by pulling them over a scissors or originally Paua shell's edge and afterwards weaving a simple flower.

Te Anau is surrounded by tussock (indigenous grass) pastures with their reddish-yellow colour.

On Dec. 10th we were fetched by a small bus from Des'home and driven 120 km to **Milford Sound**.













On the way there were many interesting places and the driver, a biologist, who had previously worked for the Department of Conservation, explained plants and animals. The partly dry river valleys are overgrown with lupina flowers a bit smaller than the European ones (top). Keas roam the rest areas searching for food. The Sound becomes very cloudy and rainy the closer you get to the Tasman Sea. Countless waterfalls lead water from the snow fields to the rocks where seals can be seen. The flowers of Esephylla horrida can be seen from far (right bottom).















Milford Sound Harbour, blackflies are called "sandflies" here and they even have got a café in Te Anau. "Christmas trees" like in Austria in the South, stalagmites in Clifton Limestone Cave, bottom right,typical Kauri wood (same hardness in all directions) in Tutapere Museum

INVERCARGILL 11. 12. - 13. 12. 2013 (Servas): MC GILLI-VRAY Alice, O'TOOLE Sarah, Zane, Satori (10 years old) and Leon baby,

After a nice breakfast, we had good porridge and fruit, we left for Invercargill at 11h30. We took the road via Manapouri, passed by Clifton with its 300 m long limestone cave (out came Viennese "cave people" - what a surprise!), had a look at the rainforest museum in Tuatapere, passed











the Gemstone Beach (photos below centre), where we met again a gold digger! This time he ran the black sand, which contains iron and some gold through a water slide to collect the fine sand at the bottom. The photo on top shows twigs of "christmas tree" and real chestnut tree. Finally we arrived at Riverton, a fisher village, called after the harbour in the wide river estuary. Of course (it was already 4 PM) the cafés were closed, but a nice lady in the information office told us to drive along the beach to the Riverton Rocks, where we found a good restaurant and café. From there it was only half an hour's drive to Invercargill, New Zealand's 8th biggest city. Its outlay is really very wide, you enter passing markets for farm stall, car sellers and supermarkets.

Alice Mc Gillivray's house is one of the few old ones we have stayed in, it was built in 1929 and has got nice high rooms. Alice is



Gemstone Beach, where at low tide jade, jasper and gold can be found. Below, the river estuary of Riverton with the little town in the back.







Photos: Top. Leon, Sarah, Alice and Sartori, our hosts in Invercargill, we with little Leon, cormorants, the "Tuatara" Sphenodon guntheri, belonging to an ancient reptile family being bred from few surving individuals in Southland Museum, right "Paua" shell used by Maoris for decorations and jewellery.

a teacher and her daughter Sarah has worked as a hotel manager, we met her husband Zane only for a drink as he has to work overtime before Christmas (driving lorries). After a wonderful chicken dinner I had a nice ball game in the garden with Sartori, who loves her 3 months old brother Leon.

Dec. 12th we drove to Bluff, the harbour of Invercargill as well as the most southern point of New Zealand's South Island. It is impressive to see the distances from there to London (more than 18 000 km) or the South Pole (only 5 000 km). In the afternoon it started raining we needed anyway at least two hours for the







Southland Museum which not only showed the history and nature (e.g. the Moa species) of the area but had got a special section about the Subantarctic Islands ("below the roaring fourties"), 4 of which belong to New Zealand. A history of countless shipwrecks, the unsuccessful trial of farming sheep, the shortlived whaling stations, the harsh climatic conditions in which rather unexpected. subtropical flora can be found but also many indigenous species. After a delicious lamb dinner we drove to Anderson Park with its beautiful gardens, to the beach and at dusk through the centre of Invercargill with its Christmas decorations (theatre, photo left side).

# DUNEDIN 13. 12. - 15. 12. 2013 (Servas): KERIN Eli (M) & Dorothy

After a good breakfast porridge we parted from Alice, passed the city centre of Ivercargill to find the small road to the "Catlins", a wonderful coastal region, with low population density. First we looked at the little museum village of Waikawa (church), close to which the petrified Kauri forest is found in the Curio Bay (left) Visiting and Visit

Haere Mai - Welcome to The Catlins

and shall be been a particular strategy and the second strategy and the second strategy and the second strategy and



and we spoke to a nature warden who looks after the 8 remaining pairs of yellow eyed penguin in that bay. Their nests are in the flax and bush area above the beach and the adults return in the evening from the sea and hop across the rocks to the sheltered nests. In the close Porpoise bay is the only place where one can see Hector Dolphins close to the coast, we saw 8 of them playing. Passing Lake Wilkie and the Waiti falls we continued to Owaka (=place







of the canoe) where we had coffee. When we wanted to leave, the owner of the neighbouring house waved us to come in and look at his rose garden. At 5 PM, the ideal time, we arrived at Nugget Point, where we saw our first seals and breeding albatrosses. In the nearby bay the yellow eyed penguins returned from their hunting day, we saw three of them walking to their nests. Via Balcutha, where we joined the N1 we got to Dunedin shortly after 7 PM.

Dorothy and Eli's house was built around 1890 of Kauri wood, it is situated in a valley north of







the Botanical Garden. Eli likes to cut his hedges and he does all his woodwork himself. Dorothy is a pharmacist working in a hospital. In the garden we found a "monster" of scrap metal.

On Dec. 14th we first went to the farmers'market, looked at the wonderfully preserved railway station built of black Kokanga basalt and white Oamara sandstone. The Taieri Gorge Museum Railway still leaves from the station (left). In the Settlers', Museum, only opened 2012 Josephine, a steam engine, is displayed, I was especially impressed by the interactive way one can use most displayed items. You can "in-





terview" old inhabitants about their settlers' past via video. After looking at the "First Church" (left page, bottom left) founded by Presbyterians who left Scotland and the Anglican Cathedral we drove to the Otago Peninsula. The high cliff drive led us to the hilltop where cold winds and clouds gave an impression like being in Scotland (left page bottom right). At the tip of the peninsula there is a spot to watch albatrosses, penguins and seals. There were also sea gulls breeding close to the foot path (left below). The photo above the gulls shows a flying albatross. Along the road wonderful succulent flowers (called ice plant) can be found (photos top and bottom). On the way back we passed by the beautiful old university building and the nearby botanical garden. On this Saturday seemingly there were many celebations for the final degrees, so everywhere one









could see people in black gowns and hats being photographed.

### CHRISTCHURCH 15.12. till 17.12. 2013 (SERVAS) Rosie HILL

We left Dunedin at 8h30 and aimed for the Moeraki Boulders (about 70 km), round mud congregations formed to stone, continued to Oamaru, a unique town built of limestone similar to that one found in Malta. It is soft. when cut from the quarry, but hardens when getting wet. The buildings on the left were constructed between 1878 and 1890. There is also a museum train going to the harbour. In the harbour road the old stores are converted to shops as antiquariats or selling fleamarket goods at a reasonable price. It was especially nice to listen to one of the shopkeeper ladies playing piano, she was













over 70 and had taught herself only recently and she played so well! It was too early to see the blue penguin, so we took a photo in the museum.

At 6 PM we should have arrived at Rosie Hill's house, but we got lost not thinking that Christchurch was so big. So we were half

an hour late and had a fine dinner with Rosie, her son Zach and her daughter Brigit. Rosie has been several times to Europe and knows Italy very well, she works in Christchurch.

On the 16th, our last whole day in New Zealand we drove to the city centre and at first were quite astonished as "there was nothing" - really - we had expected destroyed or reconstructed houses, but there is lots of empty space and the cathedral which waits for reconstruction works. There are still arguments how much and in which way it should be rebuilt. Some office houses made of concrete still have to be removed or the ground has to be checked, if reconstruction is possible. Wooden buildings such as the old boat shed at the Avon River (left) or the Anglican









St. Michael's church survived the two earthquakes of 2010 and 2011 well (left). One of the main attractions is the New Regent Street, built in the 1920s in Spanish colonial style with the Christchurch Tram with two engines from 1910 and 1920. In the evening Rosie showed

us round Travis Wetlands close to her house (photo at bottom).

In the afternoon we were invited by another SERVAS host we had contacted, Nadine French & Warren, 4/296 Gloucester St Christchurch Central Christchurch 8011, nadinefrench@hotmail.com.

Nadine has got a 8 month old baby, Bella, who was so good and cute. The two hours of our visit were far too short to talk about everything we wanted, so we hope to meet them again. Nadine has worked in England and Romania where she educated gypsie girls to become hair dressers. She is growing amongst other vegetables Jerusalem Artichoke (Topinambur called in German) and keeping chicken.

She explained to us also, that the



neighbouring house was destroyed in the 2011 earthquake due to "liquifaction", meaning that water came up through gaps in the ground! We were really impressed about the courage the inhabitants of Christchurch have got to rebuild their heavily damaged town!

| To finish a bit of statistics!     |  |         |
|------------------------------------|--|---------|
| Travel distance South Island:      |  | 2750 km |
| Total travel distance New Zealand: |  | 4500 km |
| Families stayed with:              |  | 13      |
| Persons stayed with or visited:    |  | 35      |
| Days in New Zealand:               |  | 28      |
| We did not see:                    | Parts of the West Coast due to bad weather         |         |
|                                    | Long walks due to lack in time                     |         |
|                                    | Banks Peninsula near Christchurch                  |         |
|                                    | Northern Part of South Island                      |         |
|                                    | Steward Island                                     |         |
| We want to return:                 | Yes, for at least 6 weeks in 5 years, when Manfred |         |

has retired.

We did not like:

Cafes close between 3h30 and 4 PM!



# AUSTRALIA - 17TH DEC. 2013 TO 11TH FEBR. 2014

# Melbourne: 17. 12.. - 20. 12. 2014: Stay with (Couchsurfers) Tracy and Kevin White, their daughter Alice and son.

After a scenic flight, looking down at snow-covered Mount Cook in NZ, and funny looking stewardesses performing a "security ballet" (photo left bottom) we arrived from Christchurch around 6 PM. Customs control was quicker than in NZ, they didn't even steam our boots. We had reserved a car as we had thought that was cheaper for 4 of us than taking the bus or taxi. But alas the reservation, though confirmed did not arrive on the company computer "server problems". You see at the map below that our host was situated about 35 km from the airport in the east of the city. Around 8 PM we arrived by taxi (100 \$) at our host's house, passing Melbourne's incredible skyline and enjoing architectural art placed along the highways. Melbourne is a city of 4 million people and incredibly wide spread. We had arranged, that Albert and his friend Sara already arrived in the morning, but Tracy told us, that Sara's luggage was not in the plane and they met only at 3 PM and went for a walk to the nearby park, so they just had gone to bed. Kevin is math-teacher in a private high school, Tracy teaches piano. We had had our dinner already in our Jet Star plane, so we





had tea and a little meal and could see Albert and Sara before we went to bed.

**18th December:** By bus 754 to Glen Waverly and train to Flinders Street Station we arrived after about 70 minutes in the city centre of Melbourne, streets busy with lots of trams, mostly built in the 1960s! We had a nice talk with the chan-







Map of our route through Australia: Stay at Melbourne (A, 3 nights), flight to Sydney (B, 3 nights), flight before Christmas to Brisbane (C, 5 nights), by car to Fraser Island (D, described in part 4), Armidale (E, 2 nights), Orange (F, 1 night), Mildura (G, 1 night) Adelaide (H, 3 nights), Portland (I, 2 nights), the Great Ocean Road back to Melbourne, from where our son Albert and his friend Sara flew back to Vienna via Guanghzou. The total driving distance was 4000 km with a Subaru Forester built 2013 kindly lent to us by our friends Tim and Karthy George. Top: Melbourne Flinder Street Station Photo left: water wall in Melbourne Art Gallery







cellor in the Anglican St. Paul's Cathedral (photo below), afterwards we walked through the centre of the city, passing the Chinese quarter and taking the circular tram (built in the 1920s). We went to the docklands, a newly developed area. We took another tram to the Art Gallery, which is very impressive with the big glass mosaic roof and the long water wall at the entrance. We had not enough time, so we planned to







Cicular Tram (free ride), State library, Mosaique roof, Art Gallery, Picasso









return the next day. Arriving at Tracy's home a nice dinner waited for us. Afterwards we sang Christmas carols, Manfred playing accordion, Albert guitar and Sara and Tracy singing nicely. For the next evening we planned to see the musical "Rent".

19th December: In the morning we visited the Victoria Market, bought some fruit, especially apricots as we wanted to prepare a typical Austrian dinner. It became very hot (40 degr.), so we went into Melbourne Central Shopping Centre and took the tram to Botanical Garden, where we had lunch. Afterwards we looked at the main part of the Art Gallery, there even the "Weeping Woman" (1937) by Pablo Picasso (left) can be seen. One room is crowded with 19th century paintings to give the impression how exhibitions looked like in that time. (next page). We found even a painting of Sara ...(next page, top). In the evening, after a good swim in the pool and eating apricot dumplings and broccoli soup, which we had prepared,











we went to a nearby high school and watched "Rent", a broadway musical from 2000, performed by a very good semi-professional company.

On Dec. 20th at 10 AM we got a station wagon taxi to the airport.

Sydney: 20. 12. - 23. 12. 2013, Eva's Backpackers, 6-8 Orwell Street, Kings

Thoughts about modern art, you also would have had before! - singing Christmas carols with Tracy, Melbourne train station, old powder tower in the centre of Central Shopping Centre.





### Cross, Sydney, Ph: +61 2 9358 2185

After a busy start at the crowded Melbourne Airport (Christmas traffic) we had a friendly welcome by "Mother Christmas" after more than one hour waiting (below). Sydney Airport is situated close to the town centre, taxi costs only about \$ 40.-Eva's Backpackers kept everything it promised on its homepage: plenty of clean bathing rooms close to our family room, roof terrace with a fountain and nice furniture, free coffee, tea and chocolate, fridges and stoves to prepare one's own food (which we did









only for breakfast).

We immediately started our walk down to Woolloomoolo Bay and up to the Botanical Garden. Very soon we could see the famous opera and the Harbour Bridge. We were used to interesting subtropical fauna and flora even in cities, but Sydney shows so many tropical animals even in public parks in the city. Instead of pigeons ibises beg for bread crumbs and look for cockcroaches, which can be found in masses everywhere. The Indian Myna replaces the blackbirds and sometimes a flock of parrakeets settles in a big tree and their cries can be heard from far away! After dark we watched flying foxes drinking in flight from the Hyde Park pond and possums grazing and jumping onto trees like squirrels. There are many in-With Tracy at the musical "Rent", Farewell to Melbourne, In front of Eva's Backpackers, Bottle Tree in Sydney Botanical Garden, White Ibis in the streets of Sydney















teresting museums for free like the Museum of Contemporary Art showing a Yoko Ono exhibition or the Museum of fine Arts which we visited on Dec. 23rd in the morning. But on our first day we strolled around the opera building, had a small meal in the restaurant in front of the building with a nice view of the harbour and the bridge. We hardly found a space to sit and heard locals saying, that the whole of December











this spot in front of the opera was crowded every afternoon and evening. Afterwards we walked to the "Rocks", the oldest part of Sydney and in the evening, when it started raining, went to a nice restaurant in the harbour and walked back to our hostel.

**21st December:** After a self cooked breakfast we walked to the Christmas market at the Rocks, looked at the Museum of Contemporary Art, had self cooked lunch in the harbour and went to the centre of the city (Post Office, Town Hall and the old shopping Centre Victoria Building). Afterwards we went through China Town to Darling Harbour, where Sara bought a pullover in the Hardrock Café. Afterwards Albi found a cheap Korean Restaurant in a shopping centre.

**22nd December**: In the morning we went to the Australian Museum which gave us an enormous amount of information about Aboriginal life and Australian nature. After a meal in the Botanical Garden we crossed the city, had a coffee and cake in McCafé (which Albi didn't like) and walked across the Harbour Bridge short before sunset to Luna Park (typical "Face Entrance left). At a Maltese Pizzeria we had a nice square pizza and afterwards walked back

# Friendly, but fanged

We all know to steer well clear of land snakes, but underwater it's a different story. All sea snakes are highly venomous, but they are also placid animals and will often be curious and even playful with divers who encounter them.

between November and March, especially without a protective stinger suit, can be risky business. It's the northern Australian wet season – and it's also jellyfish season.

The law adupted is this pipeline to be the meet execution markers around, and its marks of this and adult human in four markers. Millions of alonging only in the instance can higher basis four it works and, and things executing that it is an unit of the body are often field.

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enjoying the city lights. **23rd December:** After packing we walked to the Art Gallery and looked into the State Library, in which the entrance floor consists of a mosaic being a reproduction of the first map of Australia drawn by Abel Tasman. At 3 PM a taxi fetched us for our flight to

Brisbane: 23. 12. - 28. 12. 2013, Tim and Kathy George, the Servas friends we had met already 1982 in Namibia.

We started at 6 PM, arrived at 6h30 as there is one hour timeshift. Quickly after leaving

*Photos: Description of poisonous animals in the Australian Museum, view from the roof of Eva's backpackers.* 

# Pretty deadly

When the Blue-ringed Octopus is at its most attractive, it's also at its most deadly. The electric blue ring markings on its body and tentacles only light up when it attacks pray or feels threatened.

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#### Sydney Funnel-web Atrax robustus: The Sydney Funnel-web is one of the deadliest spiders to humans and has caused several fatalities before the antivenom was developed in 1981. photo Kathie Atkinson / AUSCAPE

#### Crested Pigeon



Redback Spider

Latrodectus hasselti The highly venomous Redback Spider builds its messy, dense white webs with sticky lines running down to the ground to trap wandering prey. photo Greg Harold / AUSCAPE





the plane we saw Tim - we had at last arrived at the place we wanted to see for years, we had known Tim and Kathy for 31 years and since they had moved to Brisbane in 2000 we had thought of visiting them. We had a vegetarian lasagne sitting at the terrace besides the swimming pool. a wonderful feeling on Dec. 23rd!

24th December CHRISTMAS! After breakfast we walked to the Indooroopilly train station, bought "GoCards" and took the train to Brisbane Central Station, We looked at the "United Church", the town hall, which we could enter and see the assembly room with the new ceiling covered with a screen, on which different colours or clouds can be projected. Passing the shopping mall we went to the botanical gardens, where we got a good impression of the mangrove trees along Brisbane River and had a little lunch break at the nice cafe in the garden. We enjoyed the view to the Story Bridge, bought stamps at the post office, looked at the catholic St. Stephan's Cathedral and took the train back home. At Indooroopilly Station we found buckweat in a shop for organic food. As it was so hot, we

Photos this page: Aerial view of Sydney coast, welcome in Brisbane by Tim, Indooroopilly station, train to Brisbane, monument opposite Brisbane Central Station. Right page: Brisbane Town Hall, Christmas with Tim and Kathy, Koala sanctuary. had a swim in our host's pool and enjoyed afterwards a typical Australian Christmas dinner with turkey and prawns. Very special for us was the tearing of Christmas crackers, in which a saying and a crown for everybody could be found. We were very surprised of even finding parcels prepared for us by Tim , Kathy, Stefanie and Tristan.

**25th December:** We drove to the Lone Pine Koala sanctuary near the Brisbane River, where we easily spent nearly 3 hours looking at many typical Australian animals, we even saw living platypus! Af-



terwards we drove up Mount Coottha (view to Brisbane next page top), enjoyed the view and walked on the way down to an old gold digging site, which soon













was abandoned as they got only 1/3 oz of gold from a ton of stone. In the evening we ate left overs from Christmas.

**26th December:** Tim and Kathy left for their holiday at the Sunshine Coast and we went by car to the ferry station to go to the South Bank Art Gallery, as all other museums were closed. Afterwards we went shop-









ping to town and in the evening sun took the ferry back home.

**27th December:** we took the ferry to the passenger bridge close to Story Bridge, crossed it and could see the ships in the naval museum, passed the interesting public area along the South Bank with a sandy beach and lots of children playing in the water. Queensland Museum gave us a good impression about the history of the surrounding area, afterwards we went to the museum restaurant. After another bit of shopping we took the ferry home to prepare for the big journey starting the next day.

### Brisbane-Armidale: 28. 12. 2013, 463 km 5 1/4 hours, stay with (Servas) June and Max Endacot

We took the highway via Warwick to Wallangarra, where we had lunch in the very nice station cafe. Wallangara was till about 1970 an important station, where everybody had to change trains fron Queensland gauge (3ft.6") to New South Wales gauge 4 ft. 81/2"). After crossing the border and seeing a wonderful sunset we arrived at June's and Max's Photos left p.: Wombat, Tasmanian Devil (a marsupial), Koala, Brisbane South bank at night, Story Bridge view, lunch in the museum. This page: South Bank swimming area. Road map Brisbane-Armidale. Wallangara gauge change: Queensland Rail left, New South Wales Rail right platform.













Entering NSW, young Frogmouth in Armidale park, Max'plot, Armidale centre

plot (photo below) at 7h30 PM and prepared some noodles as dinner.

**29th December:** In the morning we visited Armidale with its typical old houses, the local art museum, had packed lunch in the museum's garden and drove in the afternoon to Wollomombi Falls. to see the gorge. The fall, it should be the highest of Australia (220 m) had dried out (photos next page). In Wollomombi village consisting only of about 5 houses we sat in the garden of the General Store and had coffee and fine scones feeling the hot and dry air. Afterwards we drove to the Gara













Gorge where Manfred swam in the blue lake, an old dam of Gara river. Close by we saw an approaching thunderstorm which stayed east of the great dividing range. A highlight of the day was Sara's and Albert's ride on Max's pickup to see his cattle in the evening (photo below). Armidale-Orange: 30. 12. 2013, 542 km 6 1/2 hours. Jenny and David Day, arranged by









Photos: Top, lunch in front of closed General Store in Premer, road train, cafe in Vietnamese shop in Dunedoo. Top right page: aboriginal tree carvings at grave site, Wellington gardens, David, Jenny and Jo at their plot.



Servas host Jo Porter

We started at 9 AM after a long breakfast with June and Max, speaking about the origin of their families. The Endacotts (meaning "cottage at the end") came from Devonshire, June's family from Cornwall, one of her ancestors had the German name of "Orth". We drove the "New England Highway" to Tamworth where we had to ask for the complicated follow up of roads to get to Orange via Wellington. We took the B56 out of town and turned off to Werris Creek (46 km) from there to Premer (65 km) where we had lunch in front of the Post Office and General Store, which was closed (right page top). The houses looked very poor, we were told that there is a secondary school and another settled area further away. A further 45 km away came Coola from where we took the Golden Highway to Dunedoo ("Place of the Swans) where we had a nice coffee, apple turnover and banana cake in a Vietnam-

70











ese bakery (left page bottom) Via Wellington, where we walked a bit in the park and tried to visit the caves (closed, only guided tours), at the entrance a monument of a giant Wombat, continued to an interesting site along the road where the aboriginal chief Yuranich who led the Mitchel expedition in the area and continued to Orange were we arrived at 8 PM at the Springdale Farm of Jenny and David Day. Her friend and Servas host Jo Porter welcomed us. We had steak for dinner and David told us much about his experience with life in Australia, fishing, crocodiles, snakes etc. At 12h30 AM Jenny arrived from her work in hospital and soon afterwards also Manfred fell asleep.





*Photos: Guest room in our host's wonderful house. Below: old gold mine in Grenfell, next page lorries and station in Wethalle.* 



Orange-Mildura: 31. 12. 2013, 840 km breaks included 11 hours. Green Patch at Fifteens. 884 Fifteens Str. owned by Alex and Metaxa Kantonemi. \$ 170.- for a 2 bedroom house.

In the morning Jenny showed us her 4 horses, one of which was aready 32 years old!

Left at 9 AM to Blayney to fill up petrol, went via Cowra, Grenfell, where there was a special stop to see the old gold field with still kept machinery. From Maston on the Midwestern HW led to West Wyalong with an interesting main street with old buildings continued to Weethalle where we had a wonderful lunchtime break in the park near the old railway station (road trains on next side top), continued to Hay, before which the "Exclusion Zone" started. We had to get rid of all fruits, there was a special place with disposal bins. Around Hay many fields, watered artificially are found and where the natural dry area starts we could see emus and kangaroos. The Sturt HW took us through dry, red sand country










forming the outskirts of the outback to Mildura, where Alex, the owner of the holiday house waited for us. "Green Patch at Fifteens" is a well kept two bedroom house, oranges and a bottle of milk in the fridge welcomed us. We prepared a quick NYE dinner, which we ate in the garden listening to the childrens' fireworks (taking place already at 9h30 PM). Afterwards we drove to the river, where near the bridge a public concert took place. At midnight magnificent fireworks started, We noticed that private fireworks were not allowed and also drinking alcohol in public areas. Along Murray River many house-boats were an-









chored, but the town itself was not very attractive.

Mildura-Adelaide: 1. 1. - 4. 1. 2014 (400 km 41/2h). ROBERT-SON Alison & CHALMERS Michael (Servas)

Left Mildura at 1 PM on the Sturt HW to Blanchtown, where we walked along the old HW bridge from 1964, took photos of cookatoos, pelicans and drove to the river for a lunch break (photos next page), saw many pelikans - followed the Murray river to Walker Flats, where a free ferry brought us to the

Photos: NYE noodle meal in Mildura, next page: Murray river with pelicans and cookatoes, road to Adelaide









other bench.

The Murray river is with 2756 km the third longest navigable river (1986 km navigable) of the world after the Amazon and the Nile, it runs through the states New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. It supplies 1,5 Mil. households with water from 4 dams and 16 weirs. We passed Mannum a really nice place with old shops and restaurants. The straight road led us up the Mount Lofty range - all along the road the big water supply pipeline to Adelaide can be seen. Lots of bends led us through the Adelaide hills.







to the capital of South Australia. Around 8 PM we arrived at Unley Park, where Alison's mother Margie Tiller welcomed uswith a vegetarian bean pot.

She had studied Biology und Biochemistry and is ornithologist, it was interesting to see the photos, she took on a tour around the subantarctic islands in December 2012.

**2nd January** we drove to the city centre (3,5 km) to shop at the Central Market, where fruits and vegetables were very cheap and Manfred could buy even a filter for his digital camera! Afterwards we visited the South Australian Museum, which took nearly the rest









This Tongue Biter eats and replaces the tons



Photos: downtown Adelaide (top and bottom), South Australian Museum, tongue biter in fish mouth, horse tram from Granite Island, blue penguin in front of nest. of the day! I didn't know there was a parasite called tongue biter (photo) eating a fish's tongue and replacing it to be able to eat part of the fish's food! The nearby Art Gallery is well stocked with classical and modern paintings. Both buildings resemble a bit the British Museum in London, Cromwell Rd.There is also a museum café with nice tables in the garden.

**3rd January** We drove to the Granite Island in Victor Harbour which is a real tourist place with steam trains going to Goola and a horse tram bringing tourists across the 1,3 km long dam to the island. In former times it served















to transport wool to the sea ships lying in the harbour on the island. We watched the penguins' feeding and walked around the island with its scenic rocks. Afterwards we drove to Goowra to see the old harbour with original ships at the Murray River. On the way back we stopped in Glenelg to have dinner in a Pizzeria and



Photos, left side this page: granite structures on Granite Island, Railway Station Goowra. Right side: Steam boat in Murray River port Goowra. Bottom, Glenelg Town Hall and Settlers' Monument. Next page: sunset near Adelaide, pizza dinner in Glenelg, new trams near Glenelg terminus have replaced the 1920s' model within the last years. Bottom, "German" house in Hahndorf.









watched the modern trams coming from Adelaide.

Adelaide to Portland: 4. 1. - 6. 1. 2014 (630 km 11 h), BURCH Graeme & Dianne, (Servas)

We left the wonderful house at Adelaide at 10 AM driving the M1, a big motorway (3 lanes

close to Adelaide, no toll) to Hahndorf, which lies close to the exit. We actually didn't like to visit a "German village" as advertised and we found out, that there are some old houses left but except a hotel with Bavarian flag hoisted and polka sounding from loudspeakers there is not much German influence left in Hahndorf except that the main church is Lutheran. So we left quickly driving across the Murray river at Murray Bridge and turning to the South driving along Lake Albert to Coorong National Park. This area is full of salt lakes. South of Salt Creek, we stopped a rest place called at "Chinese Well" for our lunch break. Around 1850









Chinese gold diggers built this well and one can see, how they cut a lid waying 1100 kg out of an about 40 cm thick layer of Sandstone. When they wanted to lift it, the stone broke (photo lefthand side) and they had to cut a new one, which you can see as a whole 40 m besides the broken

one (photo below). We had once more corn as "main dish" for lunch - very practical as often it was difficult to find an open cafe serving vegetarian meals- and went on to Kingston to fill up petrol and look at the old Jaffa light house from 1872- the place is not really worth visiting. We went on to Rope, a nice old town, where the Chinese gold diggers landed in the 1850s to work on the gold fields from Ballarath and Bendigo (photo of Yvonne along the coast in Rope right page). We had a wonderful coffee and icecream at Rope and looked at the old stone houses like the Custom House - the place is worth visiting! Wonderful straight roads brought us to Mount Gambier, hardly any traffic, though it was the peak of holiday season,

### Kangaroo and emu tracks on salt lake.

as long as you are in South Australia you are allowed to drive 110! A few kilometers after the town you cross the border to Victoria, 100 km per hour maximum! - and in spite of all predictions from officials at the other side of the South Australian border (to NSW) there was no control and nothing stated that one is not allowed to take fruits with us. but signs said, you must not take potatoes with you (the only vegetables or fruit we had in the car! We felt a bit enoyed. Later than planned, as the road had been again longer than Google had predicted, we arrived at 8h15 PM at Graeme's and Di's house. Graeme was buzy mowing the neighbours lawn and Di had prepared a wonderful dinner. Afterwards she showed Manfred the old diatonic harmonica of her father, it was a Hohner built in the 1950s(photo below). Di was a teacher and is planning to help to install a school in Nepal, she and Graeme were farmers and had also

successfully produced lavender oil. Graeme works in quality control in Portland harbour from where wood is shipped to China. They both











Photos: Lavender arrangement in Di's and Graeme's garden, Albert and Sara in front of Bridgewater Bay, seal colony at Cape Bridgewater, getting soaked when watching seals.

support 9 children in developing countries, having been Servas hosts for many years they are an example how we living in highly developed countries can help with our skills.

5th January: This was a very wet day! After breakfast we drove via Portland to Bridgewater Bay to walk to the seal colony at Cape Bridgewater. Albert found, that 80 % rain was predicted for the afternoon, so we thought it wise to do the walk in the morning. We had forgotten that along the sea weather conditions change always and so within minutes strong wind blew masses of rain onto us. We coud see the seals but not continue the walk, soaked as we were, we took a few photos and returned home heating the car as strongly as possible. At home we wrung out our clothes which still were dripping wet, so Di decided to wash and dry them. After



changing clothes we went back to Bridgewater Bay and instead of the predicted afternoon rain it was sunny and after lunch in the excellent bay cafe we drove to the so called petrified forest, pipeshaped lime stone structures near a big wind park. Afterwards we went shopping, to Aldi (!) in Portland which looked exactly the same as in Germany. Portland too has got a horse drawn tram leading from the town to the harbour. For us most interesting was to see a big lorry being pulled about 80 degr. upwards to unload wood chips into a ship delivering them to China. In the evening we prepared soup and apricot dumplings for our hosts.

## Portland to Melbourne 6. 1. 2014, 465 km, 6 1/4 h. Manfred and Yvonne stayed till 9. 1. with Jane DUNSTAN (Servas)

After showing Di videos of Viktoria's singing and Sara's performing we left Di's house at 9h15, later than we had planned heading for the Great Ocean Road, which actually only starts after Warnambool. There we stopped for the information centre and took a photo of the historic harbour-town, "Maritime Village" that displays the



Photos: Manfred preparing apricot dumplings, "Petrified Forest" at Cape Bridgewater, farewell to Di in Narrawong.









Photos: Warnambool Maritime Village, Great Ocean Road: "Bay of Islands", London Bridge (bottom right)

19th century life of town. Even a woman with a typical dress from the 1850s could be seen. Shortly afterwards the first interesting stop, "The Bay of Islands" gave us an impression of the massive erosion, the heavy sea does to the lime stone in this part of the coast. Next stop was "London Bridge", two big archs of stone, the first of which had collapsed in the 1990s, after tourists had crossed it. They could be rescued by a helicopter from the remaining island after a few hours. In this part every few hundred meters a brown sign indicates new sites, like "The Arch" and one should really take time to turn off and enjoy the wonderful landscape. From the "Loch Ard Gorge" onwards suddenly the number of cars and tourists



increased and at the following turn off, "The Twelve Apostels", which are marked on all maps, you feel like in front of Sydney Opera. You can hardly park your car, every 5 minutes a helicopter started, people queuing up at the heliport and masses walking the underground passway below the road to the viewpoint. So we quickly took some photos and drove to Geelong turning off the Great Ocean Rd. at Lavers Hill. At the turn off we had coffee and for the first time in Australia everybody a sweet - without knowing that this would be our last meal with Albert and Sara. We had planned a nice supper, but travel times always were longer than planned, so, after passing Geelong, we arrived at Melbourne Tullamarine Airport at 8h45 PM, where we stopped by chance exactly at check in "J", Albert and Sara queued to check in for Guanghzeu. Distance Portland to Melbourne via part of the Great Ocean Road 545 km.



Photos: "The Arch", "The Loch Ard Gorge" with a big dripstone cave, "The Twelve Apostles", sad farewell at Geelong, West of Melbourne





## Melbourne 6. 1. - 9. 1. 2014: DUNSTAN Jane (Servas)

After dropping Albert and Sara at Melbourne Tullamarine Airport we arrived after a 30 minutes drive at Jane's house at 9h30 PM. We were surprised to be let to a small wooden garden house, which at the end proved very comfortable to sleep, we decided to use only one bed, as there wouldn't have been enough space for the spare mattrasse (or we would have had to put the luggage "outdoors)". We had to cross the garden to get to the bathroom and the toilet- it was quite romantic.







7th January: Jane shows us Jarraville and we take the train to Flinders Street (about 15 minutes) using our Myki Cards which had cost 6 \$ and we found out that you could use them, even if you had only a few cents left, so your account went to minus, as you any way can't get back the 6 \$. We walked to Cook's Cottage, looked at St. Paul's Catholic Cathedral, took the cicular tram and had late lunch at the South Bank, where we met Kevin and Tracy, the Couchsurfing hosts we had stayed with in December. After 7 PM we started preparing apricot dumplings and had dinner with Jane and Roby, her friend who was invited for her birthday.





Map of our route through Eastern Australia: From Melbourne ("A", 3 nights) we drove 420 km to Marlo, ("B", 3 nights) crossed the border to New South Wales, Merimbula ("C", 2 nights), continued to Thredbo ("D", 2 nights), Canberra ("E", 3 nights), Lithgow in the Blue Mountains ("F", 3 nights), Crescent Head("G", 2 nights) Bilambil Heads near Lismore, 2 nights and back to Brisbane, ("H") about 2800 km. Photo: Catholic St. Patrick's Cathedral Melbourne







8th January: We took the train to Footscray, where we wanted to go to the Vietnamese Market, which we didn't find, we just bought fruit in the big food market close to the station. Jane had told us, that the Vietnamese market was worth visiting, but hardly any "white" people went there. Afterwards we looked at the "Melbourne Now" exhibition in the Federation Square Art Gallery. We were especially impressed by a Javaian au-"Piano" constructed tomatic of 56 indigenous drums and pipes. Afterwards we had lunch along the Jarra river, went near the Botanical Gardens to work on our diary. In the evening we met Jane at "Sun Cinema" in the centre of Jarraville to watch "The Secret Life of Walter Miti"

Marlo: 9. 1. - 12. 1.: Andrew K. Chrisholm and Debra (Couchsurfing)

We drove to the M1 crossing the





Bairnsdale church district capital, Lake Goodridge - Sale

big highway bridge and took the exit afterwards to avoid the toll, turned to



Princess Highway via Dandenong, where we went shopping and to the library further to Sale where we had lunch at the shore of Lake Goodridge further on to Bairnsdale, took a photo of the red brick Catholic church passing Lakes Entrance we arrived at Marlo only at 8 PM (420 km). Andrew and Debra were just preparing Spaghetti, we had a beer













couple, also CS travelers and Amandine, a French HelpX student. She stayes for one year in Australia and workes parttime for about two weeks at one place for her stay and meals. Andrew told us, that he had built the house himself, the floor was covered with beautiful black tiles looking like slate, made in the Arab Emirates!

Lunch in Adam's photo studio, plants along the coast, "Pied Oister Catcher", Banksia flowering (a realtive to the Proteas, which grow in South Africa)







**10th January:** After a late breakfast, we stayed in a wonderful room and slept well, we looked at the wetlands around the Snowy river mouth and the Cape Conran, which is about 18 km East of Marlo. There is a wonderful walk from Mot's Bay to Francis Narrow, which we did and afterwards we saw our first Echidna on the walk from East Cape to West Cape. It got hot and so we swam for the first time in Australia in the sea, big waves and

Echidna digging itself into the soil, balls of sea weed, Cape Conran beach, René Sundermann and Yvonne in Orbust Gallery, our room in Marlo.





cold water (18 degr.). Afterwards we drove to Orbust for shopping and back to Marlo to prepare dinner for the whole group (7 people) - this time a nice risotto using 1 l of white wine.

11th January: We spent Saturday morning in Orbust looking at the Slab Hut, the Art Gallery and the Exhibition Centre, where we were surprised to be welcomed by René Sundermann (previous page) from the 2nd district in Vienna! We had a long talk about his past and his work in Australia, he left Vienna in his young years. We strolled along the old houses of Orbust and had coffee and a nice fresh bread in the old bakery. Afterwards we walked along the Snowy River. At the shore the wetlands are explained and comparisons with old photos

One of Adam's professional photos, Adam, Yvonne and Debra in front of their house in Marlo (below), paddle steamer in Snowy River, rain forest.









show the renaturalisation. Below the highway bridge Manfred had a nice swim, the water was much warmer as in the sea (about 24 degr.). In the evening we walked along Marlo harbour and met Amadine who swam in the river mouth. We showed her the lonely seal playing in the harbour and the big Australian pelicans. For dinner we had a wonderful pie cooked by the couple from Holland. Next day we left for:

## Merimbula 12. 1. - 14. 1.: WIL-LIAMSON Helen & Peter (Servas)

This day we had to drive only about 300 km! Already after an hour we turned off to the Mc-Kenzie River rainforest walk (photos left side). It was only one km long, but on this short stretch it showed such an incredible change in vegetation from the boring Eucalyptus forest to tree ferns and a variety of trees overgrown with epiphytes. This









type of forest was original in all river valleys and starts to be reintroduced. It grows only as long as there are no bush fires. We did part of a second rainforest walk, drove down to Mallacoota, the most eastern beach resort in Victoria (photo of coast previous page bottom), where we had lunch on a very windy bench. Though we sat in the sun, it was nearly too cold to sit outside. Mallacoota consists mainly of caravan parks and camping areas, the wonderful beaches seem to be mainly for surfing. We crossed the NSW border (left) and spent the afternoon in Eden, a deep natural harbour, in former times with a big fishing fleet, we were lucky to watch the unloading of a vessel with boxes for the Sydney fish market (photo left side). Via Pambola we arrived in Merimbula, where we stayed close to the beach with Helen and Peter Williamson.

**13th January:** Already at 9 AM we went swimming and had a nice second breakfast at the beach. Merimbula is a beautiful place for a summer holiday. There is a nice bay where the "Merimbula

Photos: We enter New South Wales, Eden harbour, rocks in Merimbula.



Lake" starts in which oysters are bred (photo this page, black boxes). In the lake entrance we saw a platform especially made for fishermen cleaning their catch. In the afternoon we did the "boardwalk" along Lake Merimbula. Afterwards Helen showed us the kangaroos near the Pambula caravan park (photo right side).

# Thredbo 14. - 16. 1.: We stay in the YHA Thredbo, double room for \$ 99.- per room/night.

Via Pambola we went to Wolumla, where we turned off the main road and saw immediately an old gunpowder depot (right). We continued to Nimidable, where we found a nice resting area along a little lake with a view of







the old stone mill built by the German settler Geldmacher 1872. Along the Monaro treeless plains the road leads to Cooma. This areas is about 1200 m above sea level and the heavy basalt soils combined with the very cold air in winter lead to the natural treelessness. We saw interesting rock formations (left). In Jindabyne, which is the Centre of the skiing area around Mt. Kosciuszko (see ski offer with special summer discount!) we fetched informations from the tourist office, being surprised to find an advertisment for "Salzburg Appartments" and "Alpenhorn" (photo left bottom), had a rest along the shore of Lake Jindabyne which is part of the Snowy River hydro scheme.

We had booked at the Youth Hostel in Thredbo. This was probably not the best idea, as we had got an invitation from a Couchsurfing host in Jinderbyn just the same day. We had to drive 33 km to Thredbo which we had to return the next morning to get to Charlotte's Pass to do the Main Range Track.

So anyway we arrived at Thredbo, situated 1730 m above sea level at 7 PM. Manfred prepared dinner, while Yvonne unpacked. The kitchen and

Photos this page: Geldmacher tower, round granite rocks along the road before getting to Jindabyne, Ski summer sale, 4 advertisments sounding the same as for Austrian resorts. the public area were really nice and we could eat at the balcony (photo bottom right).

15th January: Great track to Mt. Kosciuszko, see next page!

## Canberra: 16. - 19. 1.: Adam & Karen Visser (SERVAS)

After this wonderful day of hiking we wrote mails and packed in the morning leaving the YHA at 10h30 AM, loading the car and afterwards we went for a walk along Thredbo river, afterwards we swam in a deeper part, it was very hot, but the water temperature was about 20 degr. In the early afternoon we drove to Cooma and visited the exhibition about the Snowy River Scheme. It is a follow up of dams constructed in the 1960s managing the waters of Snowy and Murray River to generate electricity and Photos: Lake Jindabyne, Thredbo Youth Hos-



tel, Heidi's Austrian Teahouse owned for 40 years by a German family, near Cooma,



continue after Mt. Kosciuszko (+4 pages)!









Photos: Start of Main Range Track at 7h30 AM, crossing of Snowy river, "alpine flowers": feldmark buttercup (Ranunculus acrophilus), feldmark eyebright (Euphrasia collina ssp. lapidosa) - these two grow only around Mount Kosciuszko , alpine sunray (Leucochrysum albicans), snow with red outback sand, flies everywhere - opposite page: fly nets on hats, path to Mount Kosciuszko, summit (right) and Australia's highest toilet (left).







#### A day walk to Mount Kosciuszko (2228 m) - Australia's highest mountain

The 15th of January, a wonderful, sunny day, was one of the highlights of our stay in OZ! We got up at 5h30 AM, prepared breakfast in the YHA (youth hostel) Thredbo (1730 m), took the car to get to Charlotte Pass (73 km, 1920 m) and walked from there the "Main Range Track", 20 km with a detour to the Blue Lake and the track to the summit of Mt. Kosciuszko, a total of 23 km. We started at 7h30, walked down to the Snowy River (1700 m), in the river mouth of which, 500 km downstream Manfred swam last week. The Main Range are the mountains 2000 to 2200 m high forming a circle around the catchment area of the Snowy River. So one walks this big circle on the hill tops, as they are made of granite and slate it is a very pleasant walk without steep rocks, rather like walking in Austria the "Nockberge" or the area of the "Saualpe". After 2 hours there is the turn off to the viewing point of the Blue Lake, all these sights bear signs describing them and as you can see the tracks are either paved or, like the one on the photo (right) fixed with a coarse plastic mesh, this doesn't look nice, but it should prevent erosion. After 11,5 km, 4 hours walk we were at the turn off to the summit at which Yvonne points at the photo.

This 800m walk can be even done by "push chairs", it is really easy and on the summit (right) there is just a small stone pyramid.









View from the Mt. Kosciuszko range to the East, change of Eucalyptus forest to the brown and dry plainlands, below: Blue Glacier Lake, polliwogs (Kaulquappen) near the lake.





View avross the Snow Eucalyptus forest to Mount Kosciuszko, 2228 m (summit marked red) from the start of the Main Range Track.



Walking down you get to "Australia',s highest underground toilets" (photo previous page bottom). The 9,5 km walk back along the old road on which you could get to the summit by car till 1976 (!), leads along scenic granite rocks (left). On the way back we relaxed at a skiing hut, where one could get "Gluhwein" and German Sausages with Sauerkraut (bottom). Look at the wonderfully stained and twisted stems of the Snow Gum Trees (left page)







Photos: Top, Karen and Adam Visser, Servas hosts from South Korea (Kim and wife), Canberra Parlament at night, Ata Türk Memorial

continued from "Canberra" (-4 pages)!

for irrigation purposes. On top of a lookout hill in Cooma there is "Heidi's Austrian Hunter's Hut, a café, the house built of wood in the style one finds it in the Alps and it is owned by German people. We ate our packed lunch and had afterwards an "Apfelstrudel". After our arrival in Canberra, situated in "ACT", Australia Capital Territory, we had a quick dinner and Karen Visser, our Servas host took us for a night drive through Canberra. She explained to us certain specialities of the town: houses must not have front fences, the water temperature of boilers is set by the government and must not be altered by plumbers, otherwise high fines to be paid. The city was planned 1920, the





Australian vietnam forces National Monument









Photos: War Memorial with wall of names of soldiers died World War I, Vietnam Forces National Memorial, VW desert beetle. Bottom right: view from the War Memorial to the Houses of Parliament, bottom left, view from the H. of Parliament to the War Memorial.









old parliament built only for a few decades and already from the beginning the new parliament was planned on top of parliament hill, in which it was built 1980 till 1988. All museums and parking is free, also free guided tours! The war memorial, which seems to be the biggest in the world was finished 1959, it should show, the gruesomeness of war! Because of that, the monument closest to the memorial is the one for Ata Türk (Australia had lost the battle of Gallipoli 1915). He had written a moving letter to the Australian people after so many young soldiers had died. From the War Memorial the ANZAC Parade leads to the lake and in one line to the Parliament Hill.

**17th January:** We drove to the War Memorial and took part in a guided tour. One should take at least 2 hours for visiting parts of the memorial, there are many historic movies to look at and much technical equipment, tanks, aeroplanes, most impressive the big British bomber plane "G for George" with 10





soldiers on bord, 300 of which flew to bomb Berlin, 90 of these planes were shot down. An impressive video is shown about a night bombing of Berlin. Besides this plane the "Messerschmidt" is exposed, which had shot down many of the "G". Afterwards we looked at the history of Canberra in the Exposition Centre and saw the 135 m high fountain turned on at 2 PM. At 3h30 PM we managed to take part in the last tour through the Houses of Parliament with the Senate and the House of Representatives and the big hall which can be rented by anyone. As the parliament is built into the hill, one can walk across the roof, which forms an artificial hill (Photo left page)) - idea: people should be above politicians! In the evening we drove up to a look out

Photos: Entrance Art Gallery, and Australian Museum (below), vehicle of "Saw King", who drove through Australia till 1967. Korean dinner (bottom)







point to see the sunset.

18th January: Art Gallery with interesting double fountain in a "hill" with granite centre (previous pages left bottom) and aboriginal art with 200 trees (previous page top) for every year that Australia was occupied by white people. Also many paintings (above) show the cruel past relations between white immigrants and Aborigines. Afterwards we visited the Australian Film Archives and saw the oldest film from 1895 and the first entertainment film from 1906: "The Kelley Gang". After a quick look into the Australian Museum, we returned and were welcomed by a wonderful Korean dinner.

Lithgow 19. - 22. 1.: Denis and Heather Bell (Couchsurfing)









Before breakfast we drove to the Canberra flee market (photo left pagee, bottom), we noticed, that Australians don't really try to sell their goods. Afterwards we had a wonderful breakfast with croissants, left for another visit to the Australian Museum and at 12h30 PM we drove to Goulburn (90 km) to look at the "Rail Heritage Museum". In the radio there were news of fires spreading in the area. One side of the roundhouse of Goulburn is still existing, it had originally over 40 stands. There are two working diesel engines, one "S Class", one steam engine is being renovated. The general condition of the museum reflects the lack of money. The turning bridge was destroyed in July 2013 by a derailed goods carriage filled with canola seeds. Goulburn was the first inland town in Australia and it still gives the impression of a 19th century city. Below you see the nice layout of the park, in which the special breed of Goul-







burn roses flowers. Via scenic hilly country, the road running across hill tops overlooking valleys we went to Oberon, .

At Lithgow we were welcomed warmly by Denis and Heather at 7h30 PM and had a nice barbecue dinner. Denis was a stockman at Springfield farm in the Kimberley, district, NW Australia when he was 16! He rounded up cattle with horses and broke in riding horses. They used 4 horses per stockman, one for each half day, as work in hot or cold weather was very exhausting for them. Two men looked after a herd of 60 horses used for working. The size of the farm was more than 1






Photos left page: sunset in Lithgow, dinner with Heather and Denis, Grass trees, dug out from the forest sold for 130 \$, Denis showing a lignotuba. This

page: Eucalyptus sprouts, 2 months after bushfire, rocks near Hassan's wall, Clearance Zigzag railway station with coals around daysies, Austrian dumplings for dinner.

million acres! In winter they had to break the ice to be able to wash themselves outside.

20th January: Denis showed us the area around Lithgow, we drove to Hassan's Wall outlook, Denis explained us how bushfires lead to new germination of special fruit, e.g. in Banksias. We drove to Clearance Station of the Zigzag Railway, which was not in use, as carriages were damaged by the Oct. 2013 bushfire. After a nice lunch in the garden we visit Heather at her working place in the old library which has become part of the University of Western Sydney for undergraduate courses. After strolling through Lithgow's Main Street we drove





with Denis to the Blast Furnace, remains of the old steel works. In the evening we prepared soup and apricot dumplings.

21st January: It should be the "Blue Mountain's day", but it was rainy and misty. We drove to Black Heath, an old style village for a first outlook, but as soon as we left the information centre and came to the edge of the gorge called Govetts Leap, only mist could be seen, we continued to Katooma, where the "Three Sisters" can be seen from a parking spot close to town, but again we did not even stop because of the mist, so we drove along the edge till we came to a part where there was a bit of sun and we noticed that mist collected especially along the eastern edges of the highland which were directed towards Sydney and the sea. On the way back we stopped again in Black Heath to have a gorgeus look across the valley. Afterwards we proceeded to the Blue Mountains Botanical Gardens which are famous because Govett's Leap view, Black Heath, Grasss Trees, Blue Mountain's Botanical Garden, lunch break at Pacific Highway heading Crescent Head. Resting places are equipped with clean toilets and often drinking water, the surrounding area is explained giving also information about the aboriginal nation originally owning the land.

of the oldest planted Wollemi pines (they had been discovered only in 1994 in a valley closeby). Dinner was prepared by Heather, afterwards she and Denis showed us the card games "Sequence" and a game similar to Squibble. Afterwards Denis told me about Australian poetry and recited "The Man from Snowy River" which impressed me so much, that I copied it to the next two pages! Heather had to leave the 22nd early for Sydney, so we had breakfast with Denis and started at 9 AM to:

## Crescent Head, NSW 2440, 22. - 24. 1.: Lucy & Brian HARDY (SERVAS)

Via Windsor and the narrow Galsten Gorge we joined the M1 at Mount Kuring-gai. We turned off to Port Macquarie, a nice seaside tourist resort, but because of the rain we soon left for Crescent Head.

Brian and Lucy's house was a big surprise, one could see immediately



Next two pages: poem by B. Paterson, turn over two pages to continue reading!



Yvonne and Lucy (above), Brian's house



#### The Man from Snowy River by Banjo Paterson (writer of Walzing Mathilda)

There was movement at the station, for the word had passed around That the colt from old Regret had got away, And had joined the wild bush horses - he was worth a thousand pound, So all the cracks had gathered to the fray. All the tried and noted riders from the stations near and far Had mustered at the homestead overnight, For the bushmen love hard riding where the wild bush horses are, And the stockhorse snuffs the battle with delight.

There was Harrison, who made his pile when Pardon won the cup, The old man with his hair as white as snow; But few could ride beside him when his blood was fairly up -He would go wherever horse and man could go. And Clancy of the Overflow came down to lend a hand, No better horseman ever held the reins; For never horse could throw him while the saddle girths would stand, He learnt to ride while droving on the plains.

And one was there, a stripling on a small and weedy beast, He was something like a racehorse undersized, With a touch of Timor pony - three parts thoroughbred at least -And such as are by mountain horsemen prized. He was hard and tough and wiry - just the sort that won't say die -There was courage in his quick impatient tread; And he bore the badge of gameness in his bright and fiery eye, And the proud and lofty carriage of his head.

But still so slight and weedy, one would doubt his power to stay, And the old man said, "That horse will never do For a long a tiring gallop - lad, you'd better stop away, Those hills are far too rough for such as you." So he waited sad and wistful - only Clancy stood his friend -"I think we ought to let him come," he said; "I warrant he'll be with us when he's wanted at the end, For both his horse and he are mountain bred.

"He hails from Snowy River, up by Kosciusko's side, Where the hills are twice as steep and twice as rough, Where a horse's hoofs strike firelight from the flint stones every stride, The man that holds his own is good enough. And the Snowy River riders on the mountains make their home, Where the river runs those giant hills between; I have seen full many horsemen since I first commenced to roam, But nowhere yet such horsemen have I seen."

So he went - they found the horses by the big mimosa clump -They raced away towards the mountain's brow, And the old man gave his orders, "Boys, go at them from the jump,







No use to try for fancy riding now. And, Clancy, you must wheel them, try and wheel them to the right. Ride boldly, lad, and never fear the spills, For never yet was rider that could keep the mob in sight, If once they gain the shelter of those hills."

So Clancy rode to wheel them - he was racing on the wing Where the best and boldest riders take their place, And he raced his stockhorse past them, and he made the ranges ring With the stockwhip, as he met them face to face. Then they halted for a moment, while he swung the dreaded lash, But they saw their well-loved mountain full in view, And they charged beneath the stockwhip with a sharp and sudden dash, And off into the mountain scrub they flew.

Then fast the horsemen followed, where the gorges deep and black Resounded to the thunder of their tread, And the stockwhips woke the echoes, and they fiercely answered back From cliffs and crags that beetled overhead. And upward, ever upward, the wild horses held their way, Where mountain ash and kurrajong grew wide; And the old man muttered fiercely, "We may bid the mob good day, No man can hold them down the other side."

When they reached the mountain's summit, even Clancy took a pull, It well might make the boldest hold their breath, The wild hop scrub grew thickly, and the hidden ground was full Of wombat holes, and any slip was death. But the man from Snowy River let the pony have his head, And he swung his stockwhip round and gave a cheer, And he raced him down the mountain like a torrent down its bed, While the others stood and watched in very fear.

He sent the flint stones flying, but the pony kept his feet,<br/>He cleared the fallen timber in his stride,<br/>And the man from Snowy River never shifted in his seat -<br/>It was grand to see that mountain horseman ride.Photos,<br/>Fuchsia,<br/>Wollemia<br/>Down the hillside at a racing pace he went;<br/>And he never drew the bridle till he landed safe and sound,<br/>At the bottom of that terrible descent.Photos,<br/>Ieft<br/>Page:<br/>Fuchsia,<br/>Wollemia<br/>Mountains, Denis and<br/>Yvonne: this side: sud-

He was right among the horses as they climbed the further hill, And the watchers on the mountain standing mute, Saw him ply the stockwhip fiercely, he was right among them still, As he raced across the clearing in pursuit. Then they lost him for a moment, where two mountain gullies met In the ranges, but a final glimpse reveals On a dim and distant hillside the wild horses racing yet, With the man from Snowy River at their heels.







Photos. left page: Fuchsia, Wollemia lis) forest in the Blue Mountains, Denis and Yvonne: this side: sudden mist in the Blue Mountains. Abandoned steelworks in Lithgow, Blast Furnace, metal remains surrrounding Manfred like a sculpture



that it had been planned for a special purpose and really it had won an ecology award. It is well ventilated without air condition and solar energy is used for electricity and warm water.

Lucy drove us around Crescent Head and to Kempsey, where we visited Brian in his office (photo left side, top). Afterwards we went via the newly built part of the Pacific Highway across the longest bridge of Australia (3 km) via Smithtown to have lunch in a nice café along the Macleay River in Gladstone. The houses in the area had been lifted because of frequent flooding. Before returning to Crescent Head, Lucy showed us some houses built for Aborigines. They differ by being very wide with big rooms to hold all the relatives visiting (photo right side). In the afternoon we visited Liz, Lucy's friend in her interesting house on a remote plot. The roof was kept by the stem of a tree, the terrace spread across part of a dam. Liz had been game ranger and so kagaroos, which she fed regularily, were familiar to her. I liked the idea of having rain water being directed from the roof through little buckets (left) instead of the commonly used chain. Lorikees fed on the terrace and she even showed us photos from a long python visiting the terrace







*Photos: Farm terrace with macadamia cracker on fence, below: nuts growing on about 6 m high trees.* 

from time to time.

Bilambil Heights 24. - 26. 1.: Lascle Van Zyl (Couchsurfing)

After leaving Lucy and Brian, about 20 km in the direction of Gladstone we stopped at a macadamia farm and spoke to the farmer about his work. The trees being close to the river are flooded from time to time and have to be treated regularily against deseases. He harvests the nuts in April and sells them for oil, for the nuts he sells from the farm to private people he asks \$ 4 per kg. He showed us the differences between three varieties of trees he has got, they were about 17 years old and he gave us some macadamia nuts which we had not seen before on trees. Next stop was a farm selling tomatoes and pumpkins (left page), again



one could see a house that had been lifted to avoid flood damage. Along the Pacific Highway Coffs Harbour is the first place with subtropical climate. It is famous for its banana plantations, one of them is made to a very touristy place called "Big Banana", where you can visit the farm, but a real fun park has developed even ice skating (quite paradox on a banana growing place) is possible. In Grafton at the river crossing we had our lunch break in a nice park and saw a very sad monument (right) dedicated to 13 boy scouts who had drowned after a tour to the river island in 1946. We passed by Yamba, which should be a very nice coastal resort but had no time to stop, took the exit Tweed Heads to drive a further 10 km to Bilambil Head, which is situated inland in an rainforest like area.

Lascle Van Zyl who had discovered our "open request" on his couchsurfing homepage had invited us. The first evening we went to a club

restaurant at the Bilambil lake for dinner (which he even paid), the second evening Lascle prepared a barbecue with kangaroo as a starter and salmon as main dish.





The first evening we went to a club *Photos: Banana plants at Coff's Harbour,* restaurant at the *Grafton monument, Hassle (Lascle) Van Zyl's living room and dinner in the Club; sugar cane* 





Lascle has emigrated from South Africa, his sister still is owning a café South of Lüderitz, he told us that safety was better in Namibia than in South Africa, but both countries are now typically "African" with all advantages and disadvantages.

25th January: We did a big circular drive of 220 km to see some of the smaller places in the rainforest area. We crossed the Tweed River at Tumbulgum, a small scenic town to drive to Uki (B) and Nimbin (C). Both towns have been known as "Hippie" places since the 1970s. Uki is a nice little place with an old butter factory turned to shops and nice cafés. Below you see the market and Saturday's street life in Uki. There is always someone to play guitar and everybody is friendly and relaxed, many inhabitants are dressed like hippies in the 1970s. A narrow road with many curves leads to Nimbin, the centre of environ-





mental political activity. Protests from inhabitants against deforestation and subsequent implementation of mines had been successful and now Nimbin is surrounded by National Parks. There seems to be some drug dealing and also Aborigines can be seen drinking and smoking. We heard that this is becoming a problem and that there is a movement of aboriginal women trying to keep their husbands from drinking and spending most of the money for alcohol, which was not known to aboriginal culture before Europeans brought it to Australia. The photos below show the Nimbin Museum with a "T2" VW Caravan, from around 1968, many of them can still be seen in the roads, an old woman astrologist predicting













the future and an old fashioned grocery shop. Via Lismore, the district capital we drove to Byron Bay, called after an ancestor of the poet Lord Byron, who accompanied Captain Cook. In Lismore many Aborigines can be seen and one gets the inpression that this town is less wealthy than other places in Australia, Byron Bay in contrary is one of the big holiday places of the country. Driving along posh shops and restaurants we arrived at the old Lighthouse (parking \$ 7!) from where a walk leads to the most eastern point of Australia (photos below). The peninsula is a protected nature reserve with interesting plants and birds. The photo below right shows the sandy beach of Byrons Bay and on the next page the view from the beach to the lighthouse. The farm (right page) is situated in Bilmabil Heights and shows the view towards the lagoon, behind the dune in the back is the sea shore of Tweed Heads. After our return we had Hassle's barbecue.



26th January: In the morning, after thanking Hassle (photo right, in front of his house) we drove to Tweed Heads, a divided city, the southern half lies in NSW. the northern, called Coolangata, is in Queensland. So in summer it is one hour later there, than in NSW! In the far distance we could see the skyscrapers of Surfers Paradise, the main resort of the Gold Coast. We parked our car north of the centre of Surfer's Paradise and walked along the main road which is now being transformed to a walking area with a tram line running along the coast. Surfers Paradise is Australias fastest growing and biggest holiday resort (photo below), situated only about 100 km South of Brisbane. We were astonished to find very cheap souvenir shops, seemingly because of competition in such a big shopping area. A funny experience was a group of Chinese tourists who offered to take a photo of both of us with our camera, but afterwards each of them wanted to take a photo of us and

Photos: Left page; scenic landscape near Nimbin, Byron Bay light house, Yvonne at most eastern point of Australia, rock at this point, Byron Bay beach.

This page; Byron Bay, view in the direction of the light house, View from Hassle's house, Surfer's Paradise















when we sat at a bench eating our packed lunch somebody approached us to see the "strange" things we were eating. The picture above could not be taken by us, as whales can be seen only from April till November. In autumn they swim up North to mate in the Coral Sea South of Papua New Guinea and from September till November they come back along the coast and can be seen easily. They are very inquisitive, our friend Tim told us, he had seen them approaching a tourist boat, if you bang at the side boards they want to see, what happens.

So one can see whales close to the skyscrapers of Gold Coast! Our last stop was Southport, old photos from the 1930s show that masses of people drove their cars on the beach at that time. In an Asian fruit shop 2 boxes of mangoes (12 mangoes each) cost only \$2 (about  $\in$  1,50.-), cher-



ries \$ 16,95/kg, about € 12.-! In the evening we finished our drive along the "Pacific Highway" to Brisbane, turning off along the M3 which leads through the city centre across concrete bridges on the shore of the Brisbane river to Indooroopilly, the suburb, where we stayed the coming days in Tim and Kathy's house in Dennis Str. 27th January "Australia Day"(actually 26th, but holiday anyway): We enjoyed a quiet morning without driving and went to Mt. Coo-tha Botanical Gardens. In the evening Tim and Kathy had invited friends for a barbecue. Ian (Spouky) and Rose, right on photo invited us to their plot for the last weekend of our stay. They are South Africans as Tim and Kathy, Spouky knows Tim from university.

Families visited between Dec. 16th and 26th: 13 families with 31 people. Distance travelled: about 7200 km.



### Brisbane 27. 1. - 1. 2. 2014: Stay with Tim and Kathy George,

**27th January "Australia Day" (actually 26th):** After having mentioned our return to Brisbane, here the importance of Australia Day must be explained. As January 26th the original date was on a Sunday this year, also Monday 27th January was a holiday. It is a day on which one meets family and friends for a barbecue, traditionally citizenships are awarded on this day and the prime minister anounces the "Australian of the year". For the shops it is another possibility for good business after Christmas,





as T-shirts, flags, bottle coolers and other gadgets for Australia Day are being sold. Everybody seems to be happy, as holidays are not so common and wishes "Happy Australia Day!" Tim and Kathy too had invited four friends for the evening and we enjoyed talking to them.

**28th January:** A long day! We took the ferry to visit the sights of Brisbane which we had missed hitherto: The Old Government House, where the first Prime Minister lived and had his office, the Queensland Houses of Parliament with a guided tour: all important parts of the house were shipped from England, it was necessary to restore the floors completely as they were infested by











Photos left side: Tim points out to Yvonne, that the barbecue was not vegetarian, Sand-car on South Bank in Brisbane, Old Government House, (left) Queensland Houses of Parliament (right). This Page: Inside of Parliament Houses, Senate (not used anymore), Tim and Kathy with Yvonne, Flag in House of Representatives.

Eurimbela Intional Pa Queensland Sundal rum Coast National Park Frane Hervey Bay Island Goodnight Sa National Pa Marybarough Great Sandy National Park Noosaville Coold Peregian Kingasoy Beach Sunshine Coast Sippy Chloundra itans. ark bre, island tional Park -Kippa-Bing CARTO Brisbah Canndale Toow per Mount powich Gravelt **oGold** Coast

*Map of area North of Brisbane: (A), day trip to Toowoomba (B), trip to Maryborough (C, 3 nights), Day trip to Fraser Island, via Hervey Bay, Childers, Bundaberg (D, 3 nights), return trip to Kilkoy (E), along the Somerset Dam to Ian and Roses' plot south of Kilkoy (F) near Wivenhoe Dam, both dams are freshwater reservoirs and flooding prevention for Brisbane.* 











Photos: Apple Store Brisbane, shoe sale for school uniforms, Brisbane River and ferry, QPAC Theatre, view of stage, Brisbane wheel, view from theatre balcony.

the "white ant", a termite destroying houses. We could see the senate, which is not used any more, as Queensland is the only country using the Westminster system in only one house, the House of Representatives. After tea in the old Botanical Garden we looked at some shops and passed by the new Apple Store which had just opened in an old heritage building - the only Apple store in the world conserving the old architecture! Yvonne bought a T-shirt which was good, as at 6h30 PM we saw a performance of "Australia Day". If you go to a theatre, it is advisable to take clothes with you as usually it is cooled down to much. The performance was very funny and well played, but



Brisbane by night, emu farm (below)



It's a long, long way to Darwin ..., emu eggs

DARREN LOCKYER WAY WARREGO HWY 36 aidlev 43 atton Toowoomba 81 430 Roma Darwin 3422

we didn't understand all the Australian jokes. At about 9h30 PM we took the ferry back to Gyatt Park, where we had parked Tim's car.

29th January: We drove via Ipswhich about 120 km to Toowoomba, a wonderful garden town situated at the Great Dividing Range along the crossing with the New England Highway on which we had travelled to Armidale. Towns along this highway leave a very "English" impression. Lying 700 m above sea level, it is much cooler and greener there. On the way we passed by an emu farm, where they sold emu oil and meat. We learned that male emus sit on the eggs for 59 days in April, May and that they don't eat, drink or defecate during that time. To survive, they accumulate about 23 kg of fat during the year. So on the farm they cull some of them in March to get the oil which is used for medical and cosmetic purposes. In a fruit shop we bought our first "white cucumbers" (photo next page). All highways are called after typical ex-











Impressions from Toowoomba: old shops and nice houses near Queen's Park. Many clothes shops appear a bit old fashioned (right, middle)



plorers of the region, the road sign (previous page) shows the far distances indicated in Australia! We walked through Queens Park, looked at the city with its old houses and beautiful shops and drove to Picknick Point, an awsome lookout, where you see an old mythi-













cal vulcano "One Tree Hill", where chief Multuggerah had fought a battle. It had been holy to Aborigines, and we saw the lowlands to-

Wollemi Pine protected by fence, Queens Park, fountains with blue water, copper sulfat to prevent growing of algae, Australian bottle tree. Picknick Point, lookout One Tree Hill, water fall below Picknick Point.







wards Brisbane.

30th January: For 11 o'clock we had an appointment with Ian (Spouky) to take part in a free guided tour through the Mount Coo-tha Botanical Garden. In the afternoon we went a second time to the Koala Park as there were so many Australian animals to be seen, which one seldom comes across in the open lands, I got my first Platypus photos (left), the hind legs of the skeleton show the big poisonous spine We returned early as in the evening we went out for dinner with Tim and Kathy, we first had a drink at the golf club and went afterwards to a little pizzeria.

Photos: Platypus and skeleton of hind legs, Wombat, fern shaped public musical instrument in Botanical Garden. Next page: African Baobab, flowering (right), Australian tree fern, tree from South America, Ginger flowering, Monstera, African Sousage Tree, Eared Figtree.









31st January: We want to get to know Brisbane from the waterfront, taking the ferry all the way down to Apollo Rd. and back to Mowbray Park. From there we walked across Kangaroo Point to South Bank, passed by Shafston House, and had coffee at the museum. After freshing up and swimming in Tim and Kathy's pool we went to Indooroopilly cinema to watch Disney productions, "Saving Mister Banks". We were surprised that the film started at Maryborough, where P.L. Travers, the author of Marry Poppins had been born. We should get to know the origin of Mary Poppins in a few days at Maryborough.

**1st February:** We take the train to Fortitude Valley from where we walk to China Town in Duncan Str. Because of Chinese New Year we could watch a cooking performance. Afterwards we walked along the Brisbane River to Riverside taking photos of the skyscrapers and took the train back from Central Station. In the evening we prepared our trip.

Photos: Welwitschia from Namibia in Botanic Garden, Green Tree Frog, drink with Tim and Kathy, dinner in pizzeria





Photos: Woolsheds along Brisbane river transformed to flats. Walk along Kangarooh point covered with Bougainvilleas on South Bank

# 2nd to 5th February, Travel to Noel & Julaine & Magenn PULL-ER, Maryborough (Servas)

We left around 10 AM passing the city centre of Brisbane along Bruce Hw. to Naboor, turned off West to Mapleton Falls. We loved the scenic landscape (below) and the look down into the valley, but the falls were only a trickle. After











a rest we enjoyed the lovely country drive down the valley via Kenilworth back to the highway. Next stop was Noosa, the most elegant place along the Sunshine Coast comparable to "Velden am Wörthersee" in Austria. After a walk, nice mudcake with icecream and coffee, we finished our journey at Maryborough arriving at 7.30 PM (about 400 km drive). We had delightful chicken with potatoes and vegies as dinner and a very special sweet: Lemington, a biscuit cake covered with chocolate cream and cocosette. Noel works in a timber



Photos this page: Mapleton Falls, single lane road bridge to Kenilworth, Noosa lagoon with nice houses "Nitro-Ice" made with liquid mitrogen from fresh fruit and milk poured into kitchen aid

trading office and collects Bunderberg rum, of which he even has got al 4 l barrel in his living room. Julaine works in the offices of 7/11 and Magenn studies for becoming history teacher. We stayed in a big room in the basement.

**3rd February:** Maryborough - we just arrived in time for the morning tour at 9.30 AM. Our guide Ian showed us first the town hall, built as a theatre, walked to the Anglican Church, the architect of which had sold his idea twice, so an exact copy of this church can be found in Brisbane. Opposite of it one still sees the old, now abandoned railway station - but - it was only a provisional one! The wonderfully designed station ordered from England never could be errected, as it arrived in Maryborough, Vic-

Photos: Yvonne having coffee and mud cake at Noossa, Magenn, Julienne and Noel in Maryborough, Anglican Church, Post Office, Bank, where P. L. Travers grew up









*Photos: Statue of Mary Poppins in front of the former Traver's Bank, trolley in old grocery* 

Harbour of Maryborough with "time cannon"

toria instead of Queensland and can be found there without a railway line! On a terrace near the old harbour a cannon reminds on the "time cannon" having been shot every day at 1 PM in the time, when P. L. Travers had been a little child. Her memories let to the shooting of the cannon described in her book and also been shown in the Mary Poppins film. Maryborough is a nicely set up little town with all the shops you need (we found even an electronic shop, as we had forgotten our Europe to Aussie plug in Brisbane!). After the tour we visited one of the 3 oldest groceries of the world, completely preserved as it



was in the 19th century. It closed only 1982 and the oldest goods in the shelfs are Chinese tea from 1889 and curry from around 1900. We passed by the last Australian railway production by BBC which could be closed soon. In the moment they produce suburbian trains for Perth. In the late afternoon we visited early settler's graves in the outscirts of Maryborough. In the evening we prepared dinner.

4th February Fraser Island: Got up at 5 AM to travel to Riverheads

Photos: Shelfs in museum grocery, trading books from the 1970s being digitalised by the "archivary", Yvonne between roots of a gum tree in Queen's Park, Australias last train yard, new suburban trains for Perth being built.















(40 km) and take the ferry at 6h45 AM to Kingfisher Bay on Fraser Island (Fare \$ 50 return/person). We walked from the information office, where we got a simple walking map about 2,5 km along the beach to a former Marina (below), where ships had been loaded with big logs of wood till the 1920s. There had been even a village, a school and a tram with steamengine to move the carriages. The boiler of the engine was used in the 1940s for ammunition trials by the "Z-forces", a clandestine military batallion trained for secret services in World War II. We had a breakfast at the beach (left), looked at the remains of a house and searched in vain the indicated walking track, a second track was closed with signs "Danger to life". After a short discussion we decided to walk anyway. There were remaining fallen trees of the bush fire from Nov. 2013 across the path which we had to step over, after 13 km of walk we arrived at















Lake MacKenzie, the largest freshwater lake on Fraser Island. It is very nice to swim with its soft water (pH 4,5 to 5) of 25 degr. and white beaches. A layer of petrified plants on its floor keeps its water from leaking. We were lucky to arrive at the Northern end of the beach, where we were the only tourists, after swimming and having lunch we took the boardwalk (next page) to the eastern main beach, Photos: Old harbour for loading wood (left side), branches painted by Aborigines as landmark, sandy walking track and fallen branches arcoss track, Cicada on Eucalyptus stem, happy to see Lake Mac-Kenzie











where also the animals living in the lake were explained (right page).The walk back (around 12 km) inland to Kingfisher Bay was a bit boring, dry Eucalyptus forest and only in the river valley a few palms. One of the highlights was to see a goana (monitor) climbing up a tree. Again, like in all the

Fraser Island World Heritage Area Forest Lakes Walking Trall Lake McKenzie 3 hrs 30 min Central Station 5 hrs 30 min Lake Wabby 6 hrs 40 min Times shown are one way only









two months in Australia we didn't even catch the lightest glance of a snake (though there should be lots of snake species on Fraser Island). After an "illegal" swim in the pool of Kingfisher lodge we ate the remaining food watching the last daylight turning towards night and took the ferry back at 8h30. Starting with breakfast at the beach we had been self sufficient all day and had a wonderful day on Fraser island. On the left you see Yvonne parting from Megann in front of the house where we had been hosted so kindly for 3 days.

5th February, travel to Bundaberg, stay with (Servas)





#### **Michael & Eileen RUMSLEY**

First we drove to Hervey Bay, close to Riverheads, where we had taken the Fraser Island Ferry the day before. We relaxed in the Botanical Garden with a nice little orchid house, for 2 \$ you donate, you get a nice tea or coffee









Photos left page: monitor on Fraser Island, farewell to Megann in Maryborough, Hervey Bay Botanical Gardens, Orchid House, Manfred on Urangan Pier, which was built to unload wood logs from trains onto ships. It was orginally more than 1km long, 800 m of which are still left. This page: young mangrove trees growing on granite rocks at Burrum Heads, North of Hervey Bay, café at Toogon, bamboo nursery, Childers old shops, Tina Mammina in her famous ice shop.







Cane trains from the fields to Bundaberg Sugar Mill can hold up the traffic a lot at harvest time from April onwards. Old advertisment for buying yeast etc. in a pharmacy called in former times "Apothecary" like the German word - exhibition in Bundaberg ginger ale brewery. Manfred and Michael playing his world record accordion, sugar cane steam engine.



and have a good botanical conversation with volunteer working ladies. Afterwards we passed by the 800 m long pier, had a lunchtime break at Burrum Heads, the point, where it is written that on can snorkel to see corals, but the waves were so high, that it would have been dangerous. We continued to Childers, where we had a very expensive (\$ 5.- for one fla-

> vour of icecream) special Italian icecream at Tina Mammina's shop. Her family originates from Catania. Her father had worked in Australia as a boy and wanted to return to Sicily, but had not been welcomed by his family, so he returned to Australia to open a shop in Childers. The town is famous because of its 19th century houses and shops. At 7 PM we arrived at Michael and Eileen's house. Both came to Australia as 10 "pound pommes" in 1969 from


England. It took them one month to travel via Cape Town paying only 10 pounds for the travel, they were around 24 years old and had their two children, the smaller only 9 months old, with them. Micheal had worked as lorry driver for a dairy company in Perth, Eileen in a nursery. After retiring they had moved to Bundaberg because of the warm climate (B. should be one of the 3 cities of the world with the nicest climate). They live in a wonderful two storie house and we had a nice room in the first floor.

**6th February Bundaberg:** We drove the circular road to the ginger ale brewery as the weather was rainy.









Photos: Dinner in Michael and Eileen's house, Bundaberg sugar mill, heavy goods trains crossing Bundaberg river, old railway station-museum.















Photos: Burnett Heads harbour, ginger fields, house constructed of steel to prevent termite attacks to the wooden frames, old light house of Burnett Heads, view from Hammok Hill.



Afterwards we went on to the coast to Elliott Heads and Bargara, a village, where mainly pensioners live and further up to Mon Repos, where turtles lay their eggs. In the evening we prepared dinner for our hosts.

7th February: We visit the tourist information, go to the little zoo along the river close to the railway bridge, drive to the other side of the river, where the Botanical Gardens are situated. Especially in the Chinese Garden one still can see the destruction caused by the 2013 floods. It was interesting to watch a colony of white herons. We drive to Hammok Hill, an extinct vulvano, lookout point, where we met a New Zealand couple who had retired at Gold Coast. Nearby Manfred was happy to see ginger cultures growing for the first time. We had our packed lunch at Bargara and drove

Photos: Dragon fruits farm, colcony of white herons in Botanical Gardens, Michael and his Jaguar 1957, river estuary at Elliott Heads.











to Burnett Heads, where one of the smallest light houses can be seen. Burnett Heads is also famous for one of the largest yacht harbours. In the evening Michael gave us a ride in his "new" Jaguar, built 1957 which he had completely reassembled.

**8th February:** We leave at 9 AM to drive to Kilkoy area, where Ian and Roses's farm is situated about 100 km North of Brisbane. First stop was the Apple Creek

Photos: Michael and Eileen's house near Bundaberg, famous Bundaberg Rum destillery, sugar cane fields, Apple creek market with Dragon fruit sprouts and Bunya Nuts.





Market a few kilometers before Childers. We saw many farm products like sprouts of the Dragon Fruit plant and Bunya nuts, which grow on big araucaria trees only found in Queensland. In Childers the road turns east to Biggenden, a little rural town with a typical farming setup. The "Road ends" sign could be characteristic for that place, the











Photos: Hapsburg (?) Rd. near Childers in Makadamia country, Biggenden shops and road end, landscape west of Biggenden, Nanango town centre clock tower, Ban Ban Springs.











bad thing is, that the railway in the background also has ceased working. Here the landscape changes, steep mountains of the Great Dividing Range can form an impressive scenery. We visited an abandoned Magnetite mining site, which is now a quarry. From there we drove to Ban Ban Springs, where in a very dry area rich wells originate from the ground, holy to the Aborigines. Through dry land covered with eucalyptus forest and occasional farms we drove to Nanango, where we had lunch in the park in front of a general store specialised in outdoor clothes and everything you need for horse riding on farms. Look at the very expensive typical Australian boots and the tie! In a grocery shop we even found Austrian D'arbo jam, incredible! Via Kilcoy we drive along the Somerset Dam, a big water reservoir of the Brisbane river, which is also used for boating and fishing. Around 5 PM we arrived at Ian's and Rose's plot:

# 8th to 9th February: Ian & Rose Clark.

It was very hot, so after looking

Photos: Nanago general store, Australian shoes in shopping window, former Nanago Railway Station, Austrian D'arbo jam



the the variety of aloes, Ian had planted, Manfred went swimming in the small dam, afterwards Tim and Ian prepared the barbecue. There is rainwater and only solar electricity on the plot. On Feb. 9th Manfred got up at 5 AM and walked into the eucalyptus forest. Koalas feed mainly on 4 eucalyptus species which grow in the area. Rose explained that in branches of the upper 3rd of the tree Koalas could be found. - and really, Manfred could not believe it, the black spot high up in the tree turned up to be a Koala!





Photos: View of Somerset Dam, Manfred swimming in Ian's pond, preparing for barbecue at the terrace: Manfred, Yvonne, Kathy, Tim, Ian, Rose











He looked quite old and grumpy and seemed to watch us. He stayed there for over an hour, till I had fetched Yvonne and a tele-objective. We also saw two black cocatoes. After breakfast (photo left side) we walked with Rose down a scenic river canyon (ph. bottom) formed of Felsite rock, about 2 km south of the plot and hoped to get till lake Wivenhoe. As the bush became more dens, we had to turn up the hill and got to the interesting house of Rose's neighbours, Sharon and Cameron Lee (Ph. right side, top). She is artist and showed us her extraordenary paintings. After lunch we returned to Brisbane via Mt. Glorious and Mt. Nebo. It was astonish-







## Planting for wildlife

## Trees for koalas Coastal south-east Queensland

Many secure koala habitats exist on national parks. state forests and local council parks and reserves but much of the present koala habitat occurs on privately-owned land.

Conservation of koalas in the future will depend largely on private property owners managing their properties to retain or improve koala habitat.

#### Recognised food trees

The koals is strictly a last funder, using a targe sumber of excelypts as well as other species. Realise have strong regional proternoon for certain eucarypt species. In a particular district, soulas may head atmost entirely on one of two species Sometimes, particular trees are singled out for more attention

Thu following frees ats recoonised as important food trees in couth-east Quee

### Forest red gum or Queensland blue gum (Euculyptus territoonis)

This is one of the most important food trees in Queenstand. Growing 20 to 40m tail, this species is found throughout the opastal area, mainly on alluvial flats, or other fertile soils on hill stopes and mountains. The smooth bark is shed in irregular plates with white, grey and bluish patches. Flowers are usually white but can be pink.

#### Tallowwood

(Eucalyptus microcorys) This species occurs in moist eucalight open fonist on a range of soil types. Often found on hilly areas in fertile soits, tallowwood will grow on rather poor sand if subsoil molisture is adequate. Crearry white flowers in late winter-spring (sometimes summer) and grows up to 40m. The rough ned-brown bark is soft and fibrous.

#### Small-fruited grey gum

(Eucalyphus propringua) Imogular and motiled bark patches characterise this motions to sall format tree. It will grow 20 to 35m tell on a wide range of soil types but prefers moist, web-chained gravely soils with some clay contant, Flowering periods form January to March.

#### Red stringybark

0

(Eucalyptus resinifora) This species protes sandy or welldrained soils with adequate soil moisture. Grows 20 to 45m and fowers in spring and summer The red to grey bark is rough und Abrous.

> 0 u .

#### Other food and habitat trees

Queensland Government

Koalas are also regularly seen in other tree species that are used enter as a food source or provide important. Indicat. These tree opecies provide good shode and shelter or function offill suitable characteristics that make them suitable for koalsis

These trees also provide other benefits such as erosion protection. food sources and neeting sites for other manmals and meet-eating birds

#### Spotted gum

(Corymbia citriodona) (previously known as Eucelyptra maculata) Medium to large tree (25 to 40m) Found on heavy-fectured, well-drame soils on alopes and ridges. The lask has distinctive dimples. Fewers March to June

#### Scribbly gum

(Euclalyptus racemona (breviously known iss E. signate) Small to tail locest tree, prove up to 20m. Occurs in constal areas Distinct smooth white bark with scribbly patterns mude by bulk-bornd insects. Prefere city to sandy, poorty-drained soils. Small white flevers born July through to September

#### Queensland white stringybark

d

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w

(fixenyptus (indafine) Canopy of this moderate sized the tias a silvery supearance, it has rough librous back that persists to the top of the trunk and branches. Grows 20 to 30m, Facuers February to April

1





ing to see the change from the barren land around Wivenhoe to the rainforest of the Great Dividing Range, which extends till the outskirts of Brisbane. For the cof-



fee break we were freezing sitting on the terrace at windy 21 degr. while back in Brisbane it was 27! We found Bunya nuts below a big Queensland Araucaria (A. bidwillii), the cones of which are enormous and really dangerous, if hitting a car or even man. This nature drive is really advisable with all its lookout points, at one of which the ground was covered







with the Grass Trees (Xanthorhoea, photo left page bottom).

## 9th to 11th February: Back to Tim and Kathy George, Brisbane.

days in Brisbane to look closer at some parts of the city. Kathy brought us to the ferry at Gyatt Park, we got off at New Farm Park and walked the river walk with many descriptions of the former use of the old buildings, like the Power House, which has been turned to a theatre, the warf, where during the war submarines were built and the big woolsheds that are now appartment houses to Teneriffe sta-



Brisbane Panorama 1880 painted to show the progress of European settlement that had started 56 years before, for the Melbourne International Exhition of 1880. The view is from East (Bowen Terrace New Farm) to West, on 10th February: We use our last the left is Kangaroo Point from which today Story Bridge starts, the right bank in the back is "Riverside" today covered with skyscrapers.



Photos: Brisbane panorama view from the ferry (left side); Pawpaw plant (left), Tim and Kathy's house and the weekly cleaner with rucksack vaccum cleaner.











Photos: QAG ground floor and water, escalators in the back left, magnified on right foto seem to rise from the water surface. Wool memorial in front of Woolshed Appartments (left), c Cane Mill Appartments (bottom)

tion. From there we took the ferry to South Bank 2 and went to the Queensland Art Gallery (QAG), which shows paintings and sculptures from classical to modern art. Most impressive is the vast space being used for exhibitions, optically extended to the surrounding area by fountains and flat floor like ponds built in the same way inside and outside of a glass wall. Two paintings, the Brisbane Panorama (previous page) and Missis Fraser, by the famous Australian painter Sydney Nolan impressed us most, especially as we had been to Fraser Island, called after her shipwreck.

**11th February:** After packing we took the ferry again to South Bank to visit another time the QAG and afterwards the Queensland Mu-

### Sidney Notan

to and some VIC 1005 (th

#### Mrs Fraser 1947 Name of Cold and Address of Street o

Partnered 1985 with a special whole and them the Dames Correction Consultant Art Damary & Containing 1200

En 1542 Notan became intrigued by the story of Englishwemun Ellitä Fresset wirkser vessel was shipwrecken off the Queensland coast in 1836. Her story opposited to Notar's precipitation with the hitbline Natan appears. to have been particularly infinenced by Robert Gibbings's 1237 abcount: John Promany Consider 1634

It was a more of common publicity that show gathering Netwood that was compatibulity to hereit slowly and pattern in ent the founds instituated just private up the (200) with the Stark as the end story ... Takin only they plaste or but had with men menuges it the next to prove of armoust part but Second Hally Phyly redepent i not off hims have some or of present \$ 4m highs with sites

seum. After buying last souvenirs we had tea in front of the Town Hall seeing people entering though it was already after 4 PM. It came to my mind, that Brisbane Museum was located in the Town Hall, so we had a look and it really was open. At Tower of Town Hall, Roma Station above right 10 to 5 there was the last possibility to go up the 76 m tower! A wonderful last impression of



Photos: Platypus (left) and Ichidna heads (above), Kangaroo heads (below) - Queensland Museum.













Brisbane from above! After a last dinner with Tim, Kathy and Stephanie at 8h15 PM Tim brought us to the airport, where our plane started at 23h50 PM.

Farewell Brisbane, farewell Australia, farewell Tim and Kathy, it was a heavenly time we had with you in this wonderful city ... hard to part. We had driven more than 9300 km around Eastern and Southern Australia in Tim's Subaru Forester without any

> problems and had even seen a Koala near Ian Clark's plot! Hope to see you soon!

Photos: Denis Rd, family dinner and last minutes in Australia at Brisbane Airport Kilometers driven in Tim's car: 9300.

## Characteristic plants of our Australia trip

Travelling 9300 km in 2 months did not leave us much time for nature exploration, so we were especially impressed by typical plants we saw along hiking trails, the most impressive of which was along Mt. Kosciuszko.



Tasman Flax Lily - Merimbula Dianella tasmanica



Bluebush Maireana sedifolia -Hav



Banksia serrata - Marlo



Marlo



Erica lusitanica, "Spanish Heath" Lagunaria pattersonia, Primrose or Neptune's Necklace, Cow Itch Tree - Granite Island



Hormosira banksii - Merimbula



Mountain Celery, Aciphylla glacialis (Asteraceae) - Mt. Kosciuszko



Snow Buttercup, niphophilus - Mt. Kosciuszko



Hoary Sunrays, Leucochrysum albicans - Mt. Kosciuszko



Kosciuszko



Candle Heath, Richea continentis (Ericaceae) - Mt. Kosciuszko



Ranunculus Silver Daisy, Celmisia costiniana - Mt. Australian Tree Fern, Dicksonia antarctica - rain forests NE Victoria









Purple Eyebright, Euphrasia collina - Mt. Kosciuszko

Mt. Kosciuszko



Hakea sp. (Proteaceae) - Lithgow



Wolemi Pine, Wollemia nobilis - Blue Mountains Botanical Garden



Banksia sp.



Macadamia nuts, Macadamia inte-Spider Lilly, Hymenocallis occidenta-Beehive Ginger - Zingiber spectabile grifolia - Bundaberg



lis - Brisbane



- Brisbane



. Red flowering silky oak, Grevillia Dragon Fruit-, Piaya, Hylocerus un- Bunya Pine, Araucaria bidwillii banksii - Bundaberg



datus - Bundaberg



Brisbane

We thank all out friends who have enabled us to see so much of Australia, especially Tim and Kathy who helped us in every way they could.! Manfred & Yvonne Car, March 1st 2014



Singapore, an island republic, 1,7 times the size of Vienna, 3 times the population of Vienna (5,3 millions), nearly double population



density! It has the fourth-best life expectancy rate in the world after Japan, Switzerland and San Marino and the third highest GDP (Gross Domestic Production) after Qatar and Luxenbourg.

We had decided to stop over for 7 days in this city state, world famous for its shopping malls and for being a wonderful airport to change planes to other destinations in Asia. What should outdoor people like us do for one

week in such a place. People we asked before gave us little help, answers ranged from: you can go shopping for 2 weeks (!) to change planes quickly, don't stay, there is nothing to see, go better to Bali (Singapore Airlines









stewardess). Here is what we experienced: We had arranged to stay 3 days with a SERVAS host (American), former teacher in the American School and 3 days with a Sin-



gapore-Chinese couple, building engeneer for appartment houses. 12th to 15th February stay with (SERVAS) Dianne PETERSON.

Took MRT from Changi Airport to Novena Station and walked only 150 m to Dianne's home. Most condominions have a security guard, this old man was not easy to pass, he seemed not to know, who Mrs. Petersen was. After a quick breakfast and settling in Dianne's room with a nice double bed she took us to the colonial district. We walked along the Singapore













River, across the old Cavenagh Bridge, at the bottom end of which an "uncle" sold typical Singapore ice for only 1\$! I took my first Durian icecream wrapped in a blue-green toast bread, like Singaporians prefer it. Yvonne had her first corn-icecream, but wrapped in ordinary wafers and Dianne peppermit with chocolate chips, which is the most advisable one (we bought it in the coming days). We followed the Esplanade (statues show the everyday life of Singapore in colonial times) to the theatre centre, constructed

Photos: Left side: MRT to Novena station, Cavenagh Bridge, built in Scotland around 1860, Icecream with red and green toast bread, theatre centre (left and Marina Sands Hotel (right); this side: statues of chineses dealers, Inside Fullerton Hotel (old Postoffice), Little India, meal in Indian restaurant, Durian fruits.





like two halves of the famous Durian fruit and enjoyed the magnificent view across the bay to the recently finished Marina Bay Hotel with its roof gardens. We took the bus to Little India, where Dianne showed us a vegetarian restaurant. It was mostly visited by Indians and dishes containig rice could only be consumed at the upper floor. Tea, which was very nice, could only be consumed at the lower floor. Afterwards we looked at several Buddhist and Hinduist temples (photo top).



From there we rode on top of a double decker bus to China Town and walked to the Grand Temple of the tooth of Buddha (photo left side

bottom), where we had tea closeby, walked to the mosque and the eldest temple (far left) and took the MRT back home.

**15th February:** Dianne took us to the Botanical Garden, where we spent the whole day. While Dianne fetched her grandson Hans we







*Entrance of Batanical Garden, Orchid Garden, Marina Bay with light show (bottom, right)* 

looked at the Orchid Garden, which was really impressive, afterwards we meet them at the MRT station and walked to the information centre for a coffee. While Dianne took Hans to her daughter in law we took the MRT to Marina Bay station, walked along building sites to Marina Bay Sands Shopping Centre from











Entrance of Marina Bays Sands Shopping Mall with hotel and roof gardens in the background, new friends at Hawker's restaurant: Keith Lee from Singapore and his girlfriend from Brisbane, both studying at Queensland University.

where we watched the light show, which was of a similar type as the one we knew from "Velden am Wörthersee", where it is called "Klangwelle". Afterwards we walked across the new Helix Bridge crossing the sport grounds we encountered our first "Hawker's Restaurant". This is a typical Singaporian place for dinner. Hawker's open usually around 4 PM and many stay open till 3 AM (like the one near our next host in the Chinese suburb Hougang). We had a "White Carot Cake" and a dark one - but - there were no carrots in it, it is an omlette with a certain kind of beets hav-

> ing a texture nearly like fish. We heard that this Hawker's was one of the most expensive ones, though our dish (which was really big) cost only 6 \$. Afterwards we walked back along the Singapore River to Raffle's Station.

14th February: This day was dedicated to one of the few bits of na-









Ferry to Pulau Ubin, shelters with explanations along the hiking trail, coconut breakfast, bycicles for tourists, coconut palms and monkey with baby.



ture remaining in Singapore, the Pulau Ubin Island. We took the MRT to Tana Merah Station, the bus 30 to Changi village passing the famous prison used by the Japanese in World War 2 (photo left with Japanese door) and from there the ferry (\$ 2,50, goes frequently, as soon as 12 people are ready to go to Pulau (=island) Ubin (=granite). It was really impressive, to arrive in a distincte world, only a few kilometers from the city. There are only a few wooden houses with rusty tin roofs. people speak at most "Singlish", a few taxis, most people rent old mountain bikes. Because of the malfunctioning





brakes there are signs "push bike", where the roads descent. We walked to the nature reserve at the east end,

> the "tree walk" and from there a board walk through the mangroves led to a lookout tower and back to the ferry. After a hot day only drinking water and eating our packed food, we were happy

to find a small café where we had "Kopi and Teh", the typical Singaporian hot drinks made of condensed milk with strong coffee or tea. It was so good,



Impressions from Pulau Ubin, mangrove palms, Zinghiberaceae (ginger family) with red flowers, Haevea brasiliensis (rubber tree) seeds, Kopi and Teh, temple at Pulau Ubin





Singapore icecream with Dianne, view of Sentosa at night time, appartments at Sentosa bay





that we had two each and the total costs were only \$ 2.- (in Singapore city Kopi costs \$ 1 to \$ 1,20). After shopping in Changi village market we took the bus 30 back, passing the famous Changi prison. After returning home, Dianne took us to the Harbour Front shopping centre, where we had dinner in a Hawker's in the ground floor. We walked across the bridge to Sentosa Island and back enjoying the skyline of the skyscrapers and the lights of the cable way flying high across the bay.

**15th February:** During the night Nik, Dianne's husband had arrived from America, we had breakfast with him and afterwards took the MRT to Harbour Front, where we again walked to Sentosa Island, this time we entered and had to pay \$1.-, walked through the fun park area and found, after a long search the Nature Trail. This trail is constructed partly on *Old port at Sentosa, Sentosa beach* 







Monorail to Sentosa Island, free tram along the beach, farewell to Nik and Dianne in her flat, big luggage transfer by MRT to Hougang Rd., arrival at Hougang Station

the old Monorail and extensive descriptions especially made for children give the impression of walking long distances through rain forest. One is even warned, that in bad weather conditions one should immediately return to the central area. In reality the walk is so short, water falls and rocks are artificial and in a few minutes one could reach a house at any time. We had a quick look at the old fort and walked to the beach, where Manfred had a quick swim in the warm (26 degr.) sea. We took the free "beach-tram" for a round trip along the beach and returend by Monorail (free for the return ride, the ride in the other direction would cost \$ 3.-) to Harbour Front Station. At 5h15 PM we arrived at home where we had a beautiful tea with cake









## Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary



with Nik, Dianne, Hans and his sister. At 6h15 we had to rush off to our next friends:

## 15th to 18th February stay with Charlie and Cecilia Tseng (Couchsurfing) We were welcomed in a wonderful

newly refurbished flat in the 13th floor



*Charlie, Cecilia and Joey and their house, services in English, Mandarin, Korean and Teochew, priest consecrating us after the service* 

of a huge condominion in the Hougang district, a former fishing village. Charlie is a building en-

gineer and a keen motorcycler. He and his wife Cecilia have travelled all across SE-Asia and plan to travel the Panamerican Highway from May onwards.

**16th February:** In the morning we attended the service at the Catholic St. Mary's church close by to our house. We were very impressed by the "high tech aids" to make songs and preaches well understood to everybody (most of the participants have English as their second language). The church was crowded









Photo one of the "guards" took from us in front of Holy Mary, church café with food in banana and bamboo leaves, Paranakan Museum and typical Paranakan faces, pepper plant





with about 600 catholics, songs could be read on 10 big screens and the priest appeared too on the screen when he spoke. About 10 guards watched that the movement of people to the communion was "orderly" row by row. Afterwards we introduced ourselves to the priest, an Indian, who consecrated us and wished us a safe journey home. We were very impressed! Via Dhoby Ghaut we travelled up the Cunningan Hill, where parts of an old fort from WW II can be seen and were the first Government House stood. We looked at the spice garden, where Stamford Raffels had planted his first botanical garden 1822. He started with nutmeg, cloves, pepper and rubber tree







(Hevea brasiliensis), the seeds of which he got from Kew Gardens to which they had been brought from South America. This had been the start of the future spice and rubber production in Singapore and Malaysia. Close by is the Paranakan Museum, in which the origins of the Malay culture and that one of the Asian immigrants who settled in Singapore was explained, especially the wedding ceremonies of 12 days were very impressive. Afterwards we looked at St. Andrew's Cathedral (photo to the left) and walked again along Marina Bay (boats in shopping centre to the left) We had dinner at the Hawker's Restaurant close to our house (chicken and rice for \$ 3.-).

**17th February:** By bus to Singapore Zoo, where we spent the whole day. Main attractions

Singapore Zoo: White tiger, feeding of Silver Arowanas (Amazone river)







Oriental Whip Snake, Indian Elephants, work performance, Merlin sculpture, MRT connecting station

were the seemingly free ranging Orang-Utans, White Tiger, the Pygmee Rhino, the Comoro Dragon and the tropic spice garden along the shores of the big reservoir. The Zoo was foundet 1973 and appears in some parts quite old, but the wide cages and the situation along the lake makes it worth visiting. There are many other expensive attractions, like a river safari and the night visit, which we did not find necessary to book. Afterwards we went again to the City Hall Station, where Manfred went to a technical shopping centre to by a second hand lens for his Olympus camera, while Yvonne enjoyed the quietness of the garden besides St. Andrew's Cathedral. Afterwards we walked to the "Merlin Sculpture", one of the famous sights of Singapore, a statue, half lion, half fish on the shore along Marina Bay in front of Fullerton's Hotel.

**18th February:** After packing we went shopping fine Chinese tea in Hougang Shopping Centre, took the MRT to Bayfront Station to walk in the newly reclaimed "Garden by the Bay". After having seen so much of especially



View from 13th floor flat to other Hougang residential buildings, farewell dinner, MRT to the airport, butterfly house to welcome Chinese New Year at Changi

Australia and been to so many botanical gardens we were a bit disappointed at the beginning. Singapore tries to simulate each part of tropical nature missing in it's city area using enormous means to enable it's growing. The main attractions are a rain forest greenhouse and a cold greenhouse (where at the moment there was a rose exhibition!!!) - these of course we did not visit! We saw big Grasstrees being planted (the yellow Queensland government label for legal exportation still was visible). A baobab with a diameter of about 70 cm had been planted in June 2013 and looked already quite "grumpy" - but the efforts are still impressive and also the way how the different gardens were explained to be easily understandable for school children. Many people take the shuttle  $(2 \)$  to get around, which is understandable cosidering the humid and warm weather; it had about 27 degr., we walked all the distance but were happy to get inside the Marina Bay Sands Hotel via an extremely high escalator and a bridge across the highway entering the hotel in



Welcome home by Albert and Michael, breakfast

the 7th floor! Inside you have got a gorgeous view about 10 floors down to the restaurant on one side of the bridge, on the other side you see the indoor balconies leading to the rooms. Our host told us, that one of his guests managed to pretend to stay in the hotel, take the lift to the terrace about 120 m above

ground and even use the swimming pool. Normally one has to pay 20 \$ to enjoy the view from the terrace. The bridge leaves the hotel on the bayside, crosses another highway and leads into the shopping centre via two long escalators. It would take too long to describe it, but walking through this enormous space it becomes understandable that many Singaporians spend their weekends in shopping centres - and this is one of the most relaxing ones. We entered it from the top floor looking down about 5 floors, the centre of the ground floor of a side branch consists of a canal, in which one can be taken on a boat ride! The roof of the entrance hall has be cut out circularily to form a "rain eye" (piece of art), in which rain is collected and dripps into the canal.

After cooling off we crossed the Helix Bridge to take a "kopi" and "teh" at the closeby Hawker's. We walked once more the Esplanade into the colonial district, Yvonne had another icecream (this time peppermint-chocolate) and took the MRT back to Hougang Station. Cecilia prepared chicken and rice and at 7 PM also Charlie arrived from work and we had a light Chinese dinner before we left to get to Changi Airport at 7h45 PM.

At this point I want to stress that it is really easy and cheap to get around Singapore in MRT trains and buses. You should buy a prepaid card, costing 5\$ non refundable deposit, one ride costs between 75c and 1\$83 and may take up to 2 hours! MRT means Mass Rapid Transport and that's what it is! Along the 22 m long carriages (looking like express trains) only 38 people can be seated, but more than 100 standing - and you do stand most of the time. Maximum speed is 90 km/h, some stations are up to 8 min. apart! Changi is rated as one of the best airports in the world. Being home to Singapore Airlines their service is extremely good, on arriving we immediately were welcomed by a perfectly German speaking stewardess and proceeded to the checkin without waiting. We felt happy to get rid of the 22 kg rucksack and the 23 kg trunk (how the hell did it get so heavy, we threw away a bag of old things in Australia and another one in Singapore and bought only few souvenirs!) - we entered



the "butterfly house" set up to welcome the spring with the start of the Chinese moon year. Actually we wanted to spend our last dollars for souvenirs, but somehow we are no big shoppers - within all the shops we did not find anything attractive, except Manfred, who saw cameras in an electronic shop about 1/3 cheaper than the internet price in Europe (but he wouldn't dare to buy one). At the 13 hours'flight in a Boing 777-300 we were very



well looked after with lots of fine meals, but the long narrow sitting in rows of 3 did not leave us sleep very long. We enjoyed a Singapore Sling cocktail, which had been invented at Raffel's Hotel in 1915! (photo). - So this means the end of a wonderful 3 months' journey. We had left Vienna Mon. 18 th Nov. at 9 AM and return to Austria Wed. 19th Feb. at 8 AM. We got to see Singapore with the eyes of Singaporians who are proud to be not anymore a developing country and who not only have a higher per capita economic production than Austria but also a higher life expectancy! We have learned that even a shopping destination like Singapore where most people only stop over for a few hours to change planes has got its hidden beauties and that modern architecture really can be fascinating. Here in Singapore even more than in New Zealand or Australia we found the superficial concern about the quality of the environment a bit strange. On most toilets it is stressed how much CO2 they save by not using paper to dry hands but hot air instead! In parks the importance of sustaining old trees is explained - this certainly has got a pedagogic value and should be kept, but looking at the on going construction works everywhere in Singapore, this concern does not appear at least to be serious!

## Thanks to our friends and hosts from Servas (S) - Couchsurfing (C)!

The reason, why we visited NZ and OZ were our friends Errol and Hilda in Auckland and Tim and Kathy in Brisbane, with whom we stayed for many days. They introduced us to the "Kiwi" and "Aussie" way of life and Tim allowed us even to use his car for the Australia trip.! Special thanks to these friends, we have known for more than 30 years since our stay in South Africa!



Hilda and Errol - Auckland



Prue (S) - Paihia



Doug and Caroline (C) - Te Kopuru



Grant, Glenda, Anna (C) - Paparoa



Terri and Ming (C) - Hamilton



Izzie and John (C) - Tauramanui





Mark and Shana (S) - Rotorua



Chris and Prue (C) - Kumara



Sarah, Alice, Satori (S) - Invercargill

Anne (C) - Clyde





Des (C) - Te Anau



Dorothy and Eli (S) - Dunedin



Rosie, Brigit, Zach (S) - Christchurch



Nadine, Warren (S) -Christchurch



Tracy, Kevin, Alice (C)- Melbourne



Tim, Steph, Kathy, Tristan - Brisbane



June and Max (S)- Armidale



David, Joe (S), Jenny - Orange



Jane (S) - Melbourne



Karen and Adam (S) - Canberra



Margie (S) - Adelaide



Debra and Andrew (C) - Marlo



Denis and Heather (C) - Lithgow



Dianne and Graeme (S) - Portland



Peter and Helen (S) - Merimbula



Brian and Lucy (S) - Crescent Head



Lascle (C) - Bilambil Heights



Magenn, Julaine, Noel (S) -Maryborough



Eileen and Michael (S) - Bundaberg



Ian and Rose - Crossdale



Dianne (S) - Singapore



Charlie, Cecilia, Joey (C) - Singapore

We also thank Errol, Manfred's former boss in Oderstepoort (South Africa), who, as he did with his publications in the 1980s, looked through the manuscript to improve the English style.

We experienced a hospitality we never would have expected by both the 15 Servas and the 12 Couchsurfing hosts we visited. We often were asked about the differences between Couchsurfing and Servas hosts. After three months of travelling and experiences of many previous years we must admit: we didn't notice any! Servas was probably the first organisation spreading the idea of friendship and peace all over the world through people wanting to get to know each other according to its motto:

"With every true friendship we build the basis for World Peace"

Couchsurfing is more modern and social media based. We are happy that honest, open minded families can be found all over the world and being back home we are looking forward to meeting many of you, our new friends, in Austria.



Manfred & Yvonne Car, March 1st 2014

### Some Statistics - Die Reise in Zahlen

| Travel distance Australia                    | 9300 km  |
|--|----------|
| Families stayed with in Australia            | 15       |
| Families stayed with in Singapore            | 2        |
| Families stayed with in NZ, OZ and Singapore | 30       |
| Total travel distance by car within 3 months | 13700 km |
| Kilos gained: 3 (Yvonne), 4 (Manfred)        |          |
| (we missed the daily bicycle ride!)          |          |

Australia is about 90 times bigger than Austria, its 22 Mill. inhabitants are less than 3 times the number living in Austria. The picture illustrates that most parts of Europe easily fit into Australia. Feeling Australian climate it is interesting to compare latitudes of European cities to those of NZ and OZ: situation at about the same latitudes: Wellington - Rome - Barcelona;



Melbourne - Athens; Sydney - Adelaide - Buenos Aires; Brisbane - Durban - Kairo (27 - 30).



