

Australia 1997/98: Great Journey Down Under

1st day:

Early in the morning we got into the plane that took us from Dresden to Frankfurt/Main. There we went to McDonalds for breakfast. A few hours later we could get aboard the Boeing 747 of Singapore Airlines we flew to Singapore with. At this airline every passenger has his own display in the seat of his frontman, even in the economy class. You can choose from 12 different films in various languages (of course some in german too), read information about various destinations as well as the latest news (updated every hour via satellite) and there are a couple of videogames for your entertainment. So it was not boring during the flight, but I could get no sleep most of the time.

2nd day:

We arrived at Singapore in the morning and booked a room in the Airport Hotel first, because we had to wait about 14 hours for our flight. Until a room was available, we visited the beautiful designed Changi Airport. Due to the fact we arrived with Singapore Airlines we could make two sightseeing tours for free. On the first tour we went thru Changi, the district where the airport is, on the second tour we saw the whole city center with all its marvellous places, including a boat trip at the Singapore-River. After this I went tho the internet cafe at the airport for surfing the web for half an hour and sending some e-mails. Then we went to bed to sleep a few hours before we continued our flight to Cairns/Queensland. In the plane we had some trouble because they sold our seats twice, but fortunately there were some other free seats and so nearly all where satisfied then. Later there was a funny thing. The australians try to avoid importing any strange deseases or bacteriums. This is why they sprayed some kind of desinfection aerosol in the whole plane before the start.

3rd day:

The arrival in Cairns was very impressive. First we were flying over the tropical rainforest, which almost reaches the beach there, and then the plane followed the coastline until it landed at Cairns International Airport. There we had to pass a checkpoint because the import of fresh fruit is prohibited and other viands and plants were checked for bacteriums and viruses, too. Then we hired a car and drove to the visitors centre in the city, where they could recommend a very nice motel to us. But before we checked in there we had to return to the airport to change the car, because under the backseat we had found an ants nest and we did not want to share the car with them for the next four weeks. After this we drove to the north along the coastline and visited Port Douglas. This is a marvellous small town and an ideal starting point for trips to the Great Barrier Reef, but at this season there was almost no business. Nevertheless the rates for hotel rooms where very high and so we went back to Cairns after lunch and rented two rooms in the recommended motel. We informed a bit about the sights around and then went to Kuranda, a little town in the rainforest. It is known because the Scenic Railway, starting in Cairns and steaming thru the rainforest, ends here; and of course for the Barron Falls. But this great waterfall was a little creek only due to the dry season in the last months. I got very drowsy then and so I slept almost all the time in the car...the reason for this was, that I did not sleep so much during the last 40 hours. In the evening we went to the shopping mall in Cairns and in a passage we found a couple of restaurants and fast foods. Later in the motel there was a little incident. Due to a power blackout there was no electricity in the whole district. This was not the worst thing, we wanted to sleep anyway, but the

problem was that the air condition did not work without electricity. So we used our flashlights, took a cold shower, faced the situation and tried to fall asleep.

4th day:

After an excellent continental breakfast in our hotel we went to Freshwater by car to catch a train of the Scenic Railway. This marvellous rail goes thru some small towns and then across the tropical rainforest. It stops at the Barron Falls for a short time where you can leave the train to take some pictures, then it continues its way to Kuranda. We had already been there one day before for a first information. Now we walked along the river (the tour which is always taken by a guided tour) and finally reached a big market. From there we followed a walking track thru the jungle which ended at the other side of the town. In the afternoon we visited the other attraction of Kuranda. Not only the Scenic Railway ends here, but the Skyrail, a fantastic ropeway, too. This famous ropeway runs a few meters over the treetops of the rainforest, so you can see beautiful places you could never walk to. Unfortunately the lower station of the Skyrail is about 10 kilometers away from Freshwater, where we parked our car. We did not want to wait for the bus and so went on foot. 10 kilometers seem to be not so much, but it was very hot and we had to follow the road all the time and so this walk turned into a torture. Hence we spent the rest of the day in the pool of our hotel before we went into the city center for dinner.

5th day:

On this day we left Cairns. We wanted to reach Townsville and to visit a couple of sights on the way. The first stop we made at Babinda, where we left the Highway to get to the Boulder Falls. There was a beautiful walking track from the parking place to the falls, but the Boulder Falls itself were not so impressive due to less water in the creek. We continued our travel and came to the Josephine Falls. Here we were even happier, because there was more water and we could take a bath in the lower falls. The water runned down a sloped rock and we could slide down there. So we spent more than one hour there before we started again.

Back on the Highway we drove to the next town where we stopped for lunch at KFC. Then we went on via Ingham to Townsville. We could have done two more stops for visiting waterfalls (one of them the highest waterfalls of Australia), but we did not because of the less water at this season. In Townsville we watched out for a motel and then went to the boardwalk at the bank. There we passed a palm tree, where hundreds of parrots quarreled for a place to sleep...this was really funny. At the Fisherman's Wharf there were a lot of restaurants and beer gardens. At Tim's Surf & Turf we tried the seafood plate for two persons... Delicious, but it would had been enough for five persons. On the way back to the motel we passed the palm tree again, but now it was really quite there.

7th day:

We went to the Flinders Mall, the main shopping road of Townsville for breakfast. We strolled a little time thru the shops and then went to the Great Barrier Reef Wonderland, a big complex with aquarium, cinema, souvenir shops etc. and everything deals with the Great Barrier Reef. After lunch we booked ferry tickets to Magnetic Island for the next day and watched a film in the Omnimax, a 360° movie theater. After this we watched out for a snorkeling tour to the reef, but they told us, that Townsville would not be the best starting point for those activities. It is a long way

to the outer reef from here and so the tours are relatively expensive. Port Douglas or Airlie Beach would be more advantageous. So we decided to resign snorkeling here and to go to Airlie Beach next. Then we drove to Castle Hill. This is a big rock where a winding street leads to the top. From there we had a wonderful view over Townsville and surroundings. The rest of the afternoon we spent at the hotelpool, where we planned the next days of our journey. In the evening we went to the Fisherman's Wharf again, passing that funny palm tree. This time we ordered the seafood plate for one person and it was enough for two... Finally we tried some of the delicious cocktails at the bar.

8th day:

After the breakfast at the terrace of our hotel we left Townsville and went directly to Airlie Beach. It was not a long distance, so we arrived there already after noon and had no problems to find a good and cheap motel in this popular town, even if they had vacations now. In the motel we asked for reef tours and then went to the harbour at once to book tickets for the next day. Following we strolled thru the town center, visited the contiguous towns Proserpine and Shute Harbour and spent the rest of the afternoon at the hotelpool. In the evening we watched out for a pub and finally found the 'Beaches', right at the main road. There they had a good variety of steaks, burgers, sandwiches and pasta and it was not so expensive there. Later it began to rain vehemently so that we wound up there for a while. But after a time we decided to go in spite of the rain, because we had to get up very early next morning. When we reached our motel we were wet through and so we jumped into the pool again before we went to bed.

9th day:

It was a rainy day and so we were a little blue. After an extensive breakfast in the motel we drove to the Pro Dive office, where we booked the snorkeling tour. They encouraged us and told us that it is not for sure that it would rain at the outer reef too, and even if, nevertheless the underwater world would be very impressive. In the meantime a lot of other participants came and many of them did not only want snorkeling but diving. The trip started and while passing the Whitsunday Islands we could see a couple of stingrays with very long tentacles. Furthermore we got a briefing in snorkeling and diving and how to behave at the reef and after about two hours we arrived at Bait Reef. We got our equipment and jumped into the water. Nearby the boat there were a lot of small jellyfish and if we got contact with them it burned a little at the skin. But the Pro Dive staff told us, that the dangerous big stingrays and even sharks would not come here to the outer reef. We swam away from the boat and got over to the reef, which reached up to one meter under the waterline. What we saw was really overwhelming. Marvellous corals in all colors of the rainbow, inbetween lots of small and big fishes and even a turtle we could watch there. We could swim directly above the reef keeping the head under water and even watch the divers sink deeper into the deep blue sea.....it was simply glamorous. After about one hour we finished this first tour and got aboard again. Here at the lunch buffet all the people told about what they have seen. After the lunch we fed the fishes at the rear of the boat and saw some really big. Then we went into the water for a second time. Rather we wanted to swim to a coral bank at the other side of the boat, but it was from afar than the first and meanwhile a strong current has formed so that swimming was straining even with the flippers. But this current had an advantage too; there were none of this little jellyfish anymore. So we swam to the same place again, where we already were in the morning and watched the marvellous underwater world there before we finally got back to the boat. On the way back to Airlie Beach we sat on the upper deck and enjoyed the view. In between the staff served some fresh fruit before we

arrived at 3:45 p.m. In the evening we all should meet at `Magnums` for a free beer. Till then we would keep on strolling thru the shops, but our skin smarted from the salt water and so we decided to go to the motel for a shower first. There in front of the big mirror we saw the bad news. The aching skin was not due to the salt water but because of a heavy sunburn. Even there was cloudy all day long we had burned our backs anyhow, which was uncovered in the water all the time. And according to the cloudy weather we had dispensed with any sun protection and enjoyed the few sun rays at the return... However, our backs were blazing red and ached. So we hurried back to the city and asked the chemist for something against sunburn. He gave us something to ease the pain and cortison to prevent worse consequences. In the evening we went to `Magnums` but the meals were not so enjoyable and so we decided to forget the free beer and went to the `Beaches` then. This time a young girl stood in front of the pub and asked, if we come for dinner. Even if the meal was not so good in the `Magnums` we right came from the dinner and so we told the girl that we only come for some drinks. She smiled, asked where we came from and than told us in german: This restaurant is allowed to sell alcohol to hotel guests or to people who also eat something here. So it is a licensed restaurant, not a fully licensed restaurant. So if you did not book a room here and someone asks you if you want to eat something, you have to say yes, even at the bar when you order a drink, say that you already had a meal before. So now I ask you again: Do you come for dinner tonight? Of course we answered: Yeeeeeeeee!!! And everything was alright now.

10th day:

After an uneasy night due to the sunburn and an extensive breakfast in the motel we drove via Proserpine back to the Pacific Coast Highway. We went to Mackay and more along and when we were almost in Rockhampton we left the highway to visit the Olsons Capricorn Caverns. Before we reached these caves we stopped for lunch in a small inn, where we got the best steakeburgers we ever had during our journey. At 2 p.m. we joined a tour thru the caverns (the biggest private owned caves in Australia). It was very impressiv and interesting. They showed us a small, straight shaft leading from the cave to the surface, having the shape of the australian continent. The caverns are located almost exactly on the tropic of capricorn, so that every year on 21st December at high noon the sun stands perpendicular over this shaft projecting a ray of light in the shape of Australia on the ground of the cave. Unfortunately we arrived at 2 p.m. there and missed this spectacular act (it was just the 23rd December, almost the ideal date). Furthermore they told us about the phantastic acoustics in the cave and played two instrumentals by Enya to demonstrate this...there could not be a better music for such a demonstration.

From there we went on to the little town Yepoon at the pacific coast and watched out for a motel. The hostess told us that here would be no more danger of stingere or box jelly fish and so we went to the beach to go swimming. After this we strolled thru the town but there were not any spectacular sights. We bought two bottles of wine at a bottle-shop and watched out for a place for dinner. We stopped for a bite to eat at a Red Rooster (a popular Fast Food Chain) but the meals all tastet a little strange there and so we left, simply crossed the road and entered the KFC to eat something again. The rest of the eve we spent in our motel drinking some glasses of wine and watching what we had filmed during our journey until now.

11th day:

This morning (it was the 24th December) we started about 8 a.m. The weather was very unsteadily: bright sunshine and heavy rain took turns and so that we could not go as fast as we wanted. We

drove via Rockhampton to Maryborough, where we had 'All you can eat'-lunch at Pizza Hut. In Australia they call it 'works', but that does not mean that you have to work for it... Then we continued our travel, went to Gimpy and made a trip to the Glasshouse Mountains. These are a couple of rocks that raise from the lowlands. They got their names from Captain Cook, who remembered the chimneys of the glass factories in England, when he passed this coastline in 1770. Late in the afternoon we arrived in Brisbane and rented two rooms for the next days in a motel. Then we went to the South Bank Parklands, a big park at the bank of the Brisbane River, where they have a lot of restaurants, two large swimming pools with palm trees and beaches around and even a christmas market. After we had eaten something we strolled thru the market until we became aware of the people walking to the boardwalk. So we went down there too and so participated a big christmas party with a fireworks as a great finish.

12th day:

The morning of Boxing day. We wanted to stroll thru the city and parked our car in a parking garage. But in the Queen-Street, the big alameda of Brisbane, everything was closed due to the holy days. So we decided to have breakfast in the only restaurant that was open (even Mc Donalds was closed for christmas) and then to walk on a sightseeing tour, we read about in our tour guide. We also read, that in the early morning and late evening dolphins can be watched at North Stratbroke Island. So after our sightseeing tour we went to Cleveland to inform about the ferry timetable. Unfortunately only two ferries were available per day during the christmas days, at 11 a.m. and at 4 p.m., so we gave up the plans for watching dolphins there. We went back to Brisbane and watched out for lunch facilities. On our way we saw a Sizzler's (a steak house chain), but there was no way to get a table there without any reservation. Even all the fast food restaurants were closed except the Red Rooster, but there we did not want to eat a second time. So we were lucky to find a 'King Chicken' that was open this day. We drove to Mount Coot-Tha then, where we had a wonderful view over Brisbane. From there we went to the Lone Pine Koala Park, but it was closed already and so we were very disappointed, went back to our motel and spent some time at the pool. In the evening we went out for dinner into a chinese restaurant at the South-Banks, where we did not need a reservation. Later we planned the route for the next days. Because most places in Brisbane were closed for christmas we decided to leave this city next morning and hoped to get refund from the host.

13th day:

The eve before we had already told our host, that we want to leave one day earlier and we gave us back the money for this one day. So we had no problems to continue our travel. At a gas station we bought something for breakfast because most of the shops in the city were still closed. We drove some kilometers along the Gold Coast and made a short stop in Surfers Paradise. But in fact it was not like paradise there because they had built some hotels directly at the beach and the rest of the city is minted from hotel towers too. So we went on immediately and were in Byron Bay at noon. This is the most easterly point of the Australian mainland and so very attractive for tourists. Of course we visited the lighthouse but we did not walk the steep trail down the cliffs. In the town center of Ballina we made another short stop for lunch, then we left the Bruce Highway that keeps following the coastline to get more into the hinterland. We came to Casino, where they had a small pool that was inhabited by platypuses, but we were told that these shy animals are only to be seen at dawn, but we did not want to spend the night there. We continued our way and reached Glen Innes late in the afternoon. Here it seemed that time has been standing still for years, the town looked like

in the 1950's. We found a motel quickly, left our baggage there and walked thru the town. The visitors information was closed due to the holy days and moreover it was some minutes past 4 p.m. already. We informed about sights and walking tracks in a map and became aware that there was an old celtic monument on a hill nearby. We jumped in the car and went there at once, it was really not far away...we could have gone there on foot. Something like Stonhenge has been built there at a big glade, some monoliths were standing in circles and we thought they should represent some kind of calendar. The assembly had been built to remember the first celtic immigrants in Australia. We decided to drive to Inverell now, because the dusk had still not began until now. Inverell is one of the biggest centers of saphire mining in Australia. On our way we passed a saphire museum but it was closed. So we got doubts if in Inverell anything would be open but we continued the trip. Meanwhile it got darker and darker and so we had to drive carefully if we did not want to knock down a kangaroo crossing the road. And some minutes later we saw a kangaroo beside the road indeed. Of course we stopped to take some photos but the kangaroo was very shy and vanished into the forest. We went on for a few miles but turned back soon because it was too late to do something in Inverell now. Back in Glen Innes we watched out for a restaurant for dinner, but there was not a big variety and so we got into a pizza booth finally. Actually these `Eagle Boys` were a delivery service, but there were a few tables too, and so we decided to have dinner in this shop. We ordered two big pizzas and four cups of Coke, but the employee got problems with this order anyhow and so he recommended some special offers to us and it got cheaper every time. Finally we got four garlic toasts, two big pizzas, six chicken wings and two bottles of Coke for about \$25. This was a really good deal, because for that what we wanted originally we would have payed about \$34...and the pizzas really were excellent. And so we `rolled` back to the motel late in the evening...

14th day:

We left Glen Innes and drove along the New England Highway to Armidale. There we had breakfast at McDonalds and continued our travel. When we reached Tamworth we left the Highway to make a trip to Nundle. We were told, that here should be an old gold digger town but what we found was not even a town, not to mention an old historic center; they did not even had a pub there. The visitors center was closed but we read some notes that nearby was an old gold mine still working. So we went on immediately and after a twenty minutes walk we arrived at the Dead Horse Gold Mine. 120 years ago thousands of people worked here, today there was only one single digger who gained a digging license and still found some remarkable nuggets. For A\$5,- per person we could visit the mine, he showed the old and his new tunnels to us and he explained his further plans. He hoped to find once a 600 pound nugget and to retire then; till then the few nuggets he finds and the money he gets from tourists like us must be enough...

After this we returned to the highway, where suddenly heavy rainfalls broke in on us so that it was almost impossible to watch as far as five meters and the windscreen wiper were overcharged by far. But anywhen we were trough and could make another trip from our way to the Burning Mountain. This is a hill where coal seams inside glim since thousands of years. After a 30-minutes-walk at a didactic path we reached the top, where it smelled like brimstone and sometimes we watched a small column of smoke coming from inside the hill.

We continued our travel and arrived in Muswillbroke at 4 p.m. where we stopped at McDonalds again because we did not eat anything since breakfast but hiked a lot after all. In the evening we crossed the Pacific Highway near Newcastle and arrived in Nelson Bay a short time later. This is a very popular place for jaunts from Sydney and so it was not surprising that now during the holidays there was almost no vacancy anymore. After we hunted thru the whole town for an accommodation we were already on the way back to Newcastle when we found a double room in the last motel, but for A\$138 indeed. The hostess was very kind and so we got some additional blankets, took the

mattresses from the queensize bed and so we all could sleep in this room, even if we had to pay A\$20 extra. Our hostess helped us to book a dolphin-watching-tour for the next morning and then we went to the alameda for dinner. In the Fisherman's Wharf Restaurant they had a delicious all-you-can-eat-buffet with more than seafood only and so we stayed there for a while. Finally we were the last guests and around they started to tidy the room. When we left the restaurant at 9:30 p.m. we read that they normally close at 9 p.m. ...

15th day:

We got up at 6:30 a.m., because at 8 our dolphin-watching tour started and we wanted to have breakfast at the alameda before. When we arrived there we saw a lot of people getting aboard and so we decided to buy the tickets first. As the captain told us that the ship will leave in fifteen minutes, we got doubts but a look into the travel guide made it clear. The day before we crossed the line between Queensland and New South Wales. It was still the same time zone, but in Queensland they did not have the summer time, so we should have adjusted our watches the eve before...and suddenly we thought back to the restaurant and its business hours... During the boat trip in the bay the weather was not ideal, nevertheless we could watch a few dolphins passing the boat in groups or single. After the tour we took the car to Mungo Beach at the other side of the bay. If you go the dunes up you can see the ocean in front of you having a big lake in the back that can be crossed by a car ferry. For lunch we drove to Pizza Hut in Newcastle, where we had all-you-can-eat again. Then we drove via Cessnock into the Hunter Valley, one of the best known wine growing areas in Australia. Here a couple of vineyards are at close quarters with many hotels and boarding-houses inbetween. After searching a while for an accommodation in our price niveau we got a two sleepingroom suite with big bathroom and whirlpool for A\$135 at the Hermitage Lodge. Most of the wineries closed at 4 p.m. already and so we only found one where we bought a bottle for the evening after a short tasting. We went in our hotel restaurant for dinner, where we had a really good (and expensive) meal after all the fast food of the last days. The rest of the evening we spent in our suite, where we watched what we had filmed until now while we drunk the wine from the Limestone Winery.

16th day:

On this day we wanted to visit the Hunter Valley with its many vineyards. Most of them do not open before 10 a.m. so we could sleep late. We had breakfast at the terrace of our suite and left at 9 p.m. In all wineries you can taste several wines and of course you can buy it too. Due to the need of a license for serving alcohol in Australia the winetastings are basically gratis, no matter how many wines you may taste. Therefore a bottle of wine is quite expensive. In the morning we visited seven wineries, where we tasted about three or four wines in each of them. Even if this were small tasting glasses the alcohol showed its effects already and so we decided to have a break. We went to Cessnock and had lunch at a KFC's. Strengthened again we continued our tour through the vineyards and visited four more wineries before we got back to the hotel. Later in the afternoon we drove to Cessnock again for shopping where we bought a big pack of wine (five liters, but even cheaper than one or two bottles and it tasted not bad) as like some cheese and olives. We did not want to go out for dinner this evening and so we had a snack at McDonalds before returning to our hotel. Here we finished with the day at our terrace having the cheese, the olives and some glasses of wine.

17th day:

After breakfast we drove a quite lonely road up to the Hunter Valley Lookout. From top of a hill we had a wonderful view over the whole valley with its many vineyards. Then we left the Hunter Valley and went to Katoomba, the main town in the Blue Mountains. In a small restaurant, a bit away from the town center, we had lunch and then we drove to the Evans Point Lookout. From there we enjoyed the view over the Grand Canyon of the Blue Mountains. We went on to the Skyway, a scenic ropeway crossing a 250 meters wide and 300 meters deep canyon. The cage goes from one edge almost to the other, it does not reach the other end but returns to the starting point. On the way you have a breathtaking view into the canyon, at a waterfall and to the Tree Sisters, the best known rocks of the Blue Mountains.

From the Skyway we walked along the edge of the canyon to Echo Point, where we had another beautiful view to the Tree Sisters. After a short visit into the visitors center we stepped down a steep stairway with nearly 1,000 steps into the canyon. After about 40 minutes we reached the other side, where a rack-railway goes up, back to the Skyway station. But we had missed the last tram and so we had to climb up the Forbes Steps. This way was straining but marvellous, passing a waterfall, some caves and a couple of beautiful lookouts. In the meantime the dusk started and so we continued our travel to Sydney. About 8 p.m. we arrived there and watched out for our hotel - the only one we prebooked from Germany already because we guessed it would be difficult to get a room on New Years Eve. We were quite tired after this long day and decided not to go out for dinner. So we contented with the rest of the cheese and olives and of course some wine before we went to bed.

18th day:

Today was the 31st December and we wanted to stroll thru Australias biggest city. In our hotel we bought a Sydney-Pass, with that you can get reduced entry fee at some sights and all public conveyance (including the ferries) are for free for three days. Then we went to Hungry Jack's (the Australian Burger King) for breakfast. From there we took the City Rail to Circular Quay. This is the main traffic junction, from here the ferries leave in any direction and a couple of busses and even the City Rail stop at Circular Quay. Firstly we walked to the Sydney Opera House. At the one hand it looks unique and marvellous from outside, at the other hand we were disappointed about the inner design, at least from the entrance hall. We got the feeling to be in the main railway station. From the Opera House we walked thru the Botanic Gardens passing the Governments House to Mrs. MacQuires Point. This is a chair chiseled in a rock (for the wife of the former governor MacQuire) which offers a beautiful view around the bay. Here we got into the City Explorer Bus. This busses go every 20 minutes on a two hour city tour where they give hints and information about the sights. We got out at 'The Rocks' and strolled a while thru this old district. After a little lunch snack we walked to the Harbour Bridge and got up one pillar. There is an exhibition about the bridges history inside and from top we had a nice view to the city, the opera, Darling Harbour and the suburbs.

We went back to Circular Quay and took a ferry to Darling Harbour, where we had a cup of coffee and bought some donuts for the breakfast next morning. Then we went to St. Martins Place where we took the City Rail back to our hotel. About 8:30 p.m. we got off again with the rest of our five-liters-pack of wine and two bottles of sparkling wine to get to the harbour for watching the long promoted New-Years-fireworks. But even before arriving at Circular Quay we heard the salutes and saw light and when we got out of the train we could watch the last minutes of the tree-million-dollar-fireworks. In Sydney they have a great show at about 8:30 p.m. where people go to. It finishes with a magnificent fireworks and then people go home to celebrate the new year with their

families. Of course we were very disappointed and perplex. We decided to sit on the steps in front of the opera and to wait there for midnight. But it was not easy to get to the opera yet because thousands of people came from there right now. After about one hour of pushing and pitchforking we managed this 500 meters way and set on the steps in front of the opera and by far we were not the only ones. At midnight some boats made a little fireworks but it was not the high spirit like three hours before.

19th day:

This morning we slept late, brewed some coffee at about 9 a.m. and had some donuts for breakfast. Then we went to Circular Quay by bus where we took a ferry to Manly, where the great Oceanworld is the main attraction. We asked for special events there and were told about the shark feeding at 2 p.m. So we had enough time for a dinner. We found a pretty nice cafe at a corner where we got an excellent barramundi fillet (a native fish). After dinner we visited the Oceanworld. There we could walk thru ducts from glass with a couple of fish swimming around...including some really big sharks. Furthermore they had a pool with seals, one pool with turtles and they taught a lot about seaplants and sea animals. At about 2 p.m. two men dived into the big pool and started feeding the sharks and we could watch it in the glass ducts. After this we went back to the ferry to get back to Circular Quay. But this time we took a CityCat, a fast catamaran which is two times as quick as a common ferry boat, then we went back to the hotel by the City Rail. Here we took our car and drove out of the city on the highway to Kiama. This small town is famous for its blowhole, a hole in the rock, where a seawater fountain speeds up several meters at stormy weather. But unfortunately the weather was not as stormy as necessary for this spectacle. So we kept on driving to Bundanoon, where we wanted to visit the Glow Worm Glen. In this glen glowworms are to be seen after dark, but when we arrived at the path leading to the glen it was not dark indeed and it started raining. So we decided to watch out for a restaurant for dinner and finally got to the 'Old Heidelberg'. This was a very snugly tavern serving excellent german meals. The hostess immigrated from Cologne 41 years ago and we talked together a while. When we left she gave us an accommodation guide covering the whole Australia where almost all hotels with address and prices were registered. This was very useful for us in finding accommodations for the next days and weeks. Now we went to the path to the Glow Worm Glen again. It was about 9:30 p.m. now and absolutely dark. We stumbled the way along using a flashlight, reached the glen after about 20 minutes and saw a couple of glowworms there indeed. Then we returned to our car and drove at the Hume Highway back to Sydney where we arrived at midnight.

20th day:

We only had a coffee in our hotel this morning and then took the City Rail to St. Martins Place. From there we went to the Sydney Tower and got up for a view. Then we went to the Circular Quay and made a harbour cruise. Following we strolled thru the city on separate ways. We, Doreen and me, went to the Queen Victoria Building, a big and quite exclusive store. In the ground floor there we bought two sandwiches for lunch and went to the Hyde Park then. We visited St. Marys Cathedral and took a bus to Bondi Beach then. This is the most popular beach of Sydney, here was a high spirit comparable with Surfers Paradise at the Gold Coast. We looked around for some minutes and sipped a cup of coffee in a small cafe at the alameda. Then we returned to the city center. We went by bus to Bondy Junction, where we shopped a while and then took the City Rail to Central Station. So we were even faster than the bus from Bondi Beach to the city. From Central Station we walked to the Market Place, another big store, and from there to Chinatown, where we

had an excellent dinner. Finally we went back to our hotel in Kings Cross, where we wanted to meet our friends again.

Together we went to the Hard Rock Cafe into the city. Here it was quite crowded and it was not possible to get a table. Anyway we already had our dinner, so we sat on the bar for a drink. On our way back we visited some shops in Kings Cross and in a small boutique I got some nice shirts, even cheaper than in the city center.

21st day:

In the morning we went to McDonalds for breakfast. Then we returned to the hotel to check out there and left Sydney driving the Hume Highway. We went via Goulburn directly to Canberra, the capital of Australia. A few kilometers before reaching Canberra we saw some posters beneath the street advertising for Summernats, some kind of car racing. Due to this there was a crowd in the visitors information; lots of people looking for accommodation for the weekend, so it was almost impossible to get one. So we decided to visit the sights first. But Canberra does not have a common city center. The city was planned very straggly right from the start with lots of green spaces inbetween. In fact in the real center the new parliament house is located on a hill somewhat below the old, substantially smaller (but more beautiful) parliament house and something apart from there a park with the Thomas Cook Jet Fountain. You will vainly look for a shopping mall or dwelling houses there, something like that only exists in the suburbs. In the virtual center only was a food mall we visited next. But the word mall is exaggerated by far, we found a few snack bars and only two of them were opened. After lunch we visited the Captain Cook Jet Fountain and the New Parliament which is accessible for the public. But when we had visited this we were through with the main sights of Canberra. We just went to the TV tower at the Black Mountain nearby and then left the Australian Capital Territory quite disappointed. We followed a small road to the coast and arrived in Batemans Bay in the evening, where we got a pretty nice flat for four for A\$100,-. We had two bedrooms there, a living room with kitchen, a bathroom and even a washing machine too. We took advantage of this, bought a box of washing powder and started the machine. Actually we wanted to have dinner now and to plan the route for the next days then. But while browsing thru our travel guide we read about Pebbly Beach, a place nearby, where kangaroos come to the beach every evening. Due to the dusk coming in right now we did not want to wait any longer and started again. After about 15 kilometers on the sealed road and eight more kilometers gravelroad we reached the beach. There was a campground there and everywhere they had signs not to feed kangaroos, but we could not see any of these animals. We went closer to the beach and discovered two rabbits at a meadow, but nothing else. On the way back to our car we saw a single kangaroo shy jumping into the forest. And suddenly, a few meters away a whole herd sat on the grass and did not seem to care about us. At the parking place close to our car we saw another single kangaroo that did not mention our headlights so that we had enough time for taking photos and for filming. Happily and satisfied we drove back to our flat.

22nd day:

We had breakfast in our flat, packed up the washed and dried clothes and left Batemans Bay. We went south on the Princes Highway passing Lakes Entrance to Philip Island, a long distance and so we only stopped once for lunch. We had made some emergency-sandwiches before we started and so we did not had to watch out for a restaurant. We reached Cowes at Philip Island late in the afternoon, booked two rooms and went out for dinner. About one hour before sunset we drove to the penguin parade. Every evening after dusk hundreds of penguins come ashore, where they can

be watched by tourists from special platforms. This evening was quite cold and there was a strong wind coming from the sea so that we got cold while waiting for the penguins.; and they really kept us waiting. Sometimes small groups met on the shore, but returned into the water again and it took a long time before several groups went to the dunes in single file.

23rd day:

We left the motel in the morning, had breakfast in a bakery and finally went to `The Nobbies`. There they also had a blowhole, but as in Kiama here the weather was not right for this spectacle, too. The cliffs here are hatchery for seagulls, so a lot of them were to be seen and we were lucky to see a nest with two chicken. Normally seals can be watched at Seal Rock, which is located in front of `The Nobbies`, but the path (which is accessible at low tide only) was closed due to the breeding season of the seagulls. So we returned to the mainland and kept on driving to Melbourne. There we went to the visitors information first and asked for a cheap accommodation. Following we went to the bureau of the RAV (automobil-club of Victoria) to get a city map. Now we drove to the Georgian Court, our chosen accommodation. It was located a few minutes apart from the city center, nearby the Fitzroy Gardens and the tennis stadium, where annual in January the Australian Open take place. We liked the Georgian Court and so we discharged our baggage, parked the car behind the house and walked back to the city. On our way we came thru the Fitzroy Gardens, passing Captain Cooks Cottage (which had been teared off at Cooks birth place in York and rebuilt here) and the Botanic Gardens and after about twenty minutes we were back in the city center. We had lunch at Fast Eddy's, a steak house, and made a sightseeing tour then. Furthermore we turned a loop around the city center using the free historic tram. Following we strolled to Flinders Street Station, the Town Hall and St. Pauls Cathedral and finally returned to our hotel. In the evening we went into the Hard Rock Cafe for dinner. It was not as crowded as in Sydney (o.k. it was not weekend yet) and so it was no problem to get a table. On our way home we saw some possums in the Fitzroy Gardens which live there obviously. Some people came with their children to feed this pretty animals and so we decided to do this next evening too.

24th day:

After an excellent miscellaneous Continental Breakfast we went to the Old Melbourne Gaol by car. This is a preserved part of the old gaol of the city, where Ned Kelly was executed in due time. After this we walked to the ANZ-Tower, because we read in our travel guide, that there would be a public lookout platform. But the tower was a commercial building only and there was no lookout platform. As we found out later our travel guide was not wrong but misleading. However, we parked our car and went to the Rialto-Towers, where they had a visitors information cine, a couple of souvenir shops and a floor with scenic cafe and so we still could watch Melbourne from above. Around noon we drove to the suburbs. We had read that there would be a couple of special restaurants and even whole districts with only greek, italian or turkish inhabitants. We found a small greek restaurant for lunch and following went to St. Kilda. This is a popular suburb by the sea having an alameda, a joyride etc. and is often compared with Bondi Beach in Sydney. But due to the more vicissitudinous weather in Melbourne there are not so many people and we did not agree to this compare. That was also the reason why we did not stay very long there but went back to our guest house where we parked the car and went shopping into the city. We were not on the mood for a big dinner this evening and so we made a short stop at Hungry Jack's (the Aussie Burger is really delicious) and went back home then. After sunset we walked to the Fitzroy Gardens again to feed

the pretty possums and take some photos of them. We finished the day in our room, drinking a glass of wine and watching the new taken video scenes.

25th day:

After another excellent breakfast in our guest house we left Melbourne. We went to Ballarat, where we visited the old gold digger town Sovereign Hill. We participated a guided tour thru the main tunnel of an old mine, but it was not as great as at the digger in the Dead Horse Gold Mine near Nundle due to the masses of tourists here. We watched some shows too, where we were told how they coined and made bullions years ago; furthermore we threw a bowl at a very old bowling course. In Ballarat we stopped for lunch and after this we went via Colac to the Great Ocean Road. At the coast there is the Oatway National Park, where we made a short walk. Then we went on to Levers Hill. We read about a motel owned by Germans who serve excellent german meals there. Unfortunately they had no vacancy and moreover it was the only hotel there at all. So we watched out in the vicinity and found some farm houses where they offered bed & breakfast too. But even there was no vacancy and they always sent us to the next farm. We had already left Levers Hill when we got a hint from a farmer to leave the main road some kilometers later to get to another farm located a bit apart from the road. So we kept on searching and finally found this farm where a young woman welcomed us. She offered a small cabin some minutes beyond the farm house to us. Together we got there and visited the cabin. When we discussed about this cabin the women suddenly asked in german with a swiss accent: "Oh, you speak german, too? So this is more easy for me..." We talked a while and she told us that she and her husband bought this farm six months ago. The cabin was A\$25,- per person and we could come to the farm house for breakfast. We liked it and it was the only accommodation anyway. So we agreed and went back to Lavers Hill then to have dinner in the roadhouse (the pizza there was quite good). After dinner we went to Melba Gully, a small pool nearby, and we read about platypuses there. The walking track was marvellous but we did not see any platypuses in the water. We spent the rest of the evening in our cabin planning the route for the next days. But it got colder and colder and there was no heating and so we went to bed soon...

26th day:

When we got up in the morning it was very cold so that we dressed with the clothes we wore when we started our journey in Germany. We went to the farm house where our breakfast was already made. After a small talk with our hostess we started again because we had a big program of sights today. We drove to Moonlight Head first and walked down to Wreck Beach. We had read about shipwrecks here, but all we found were two rusty anchors. We continued driving along the Great Ocean Road. Wind and waves created bizarre shapes at this coastline. Surely the "Twelve Apostels", some single rocks standing in the water, are best known; we also visited Loch Ard (where we found two caves too), Sentinel Rock, The Arch, and of course the London Bridge. The time passed by very quickly and so it was in the afternoon already when we left this phantastic part of the coastline to get to Warnambool. Here we watched out for a motel and finally found a very good one having a pool, a whirlpool and a barbecue area for a moderate price. We decided to have a barbecue this evening and went shopping next. We came back with some pretty good steaks, BBQ sauce and salad and sat around the barbecue. After this great dinner we had a short jump into the pool before we started again to get to the Tower Hill Reserve. This is a small peninsula in a lake (which was a volcano in former times) having a marvellous fauna. Right at the gateway we were welcomed by two kangaroos that browsed there. We parked our car nearby the visitors center

which was already closed. But due to this there were absolutely no tourists and we could watch some emus and kangaroos, one of them with a joey in the bag. In the meantime the dusk began but we kept on walking due to our hope to watch a wombat or an echidna. But we did not and went back to our motel after a while.

We planned to make a trip from Adelaide to Kangaroo Island in the next days and asked our hostess if a reservation of a ferry or a hotel would be necessary. She told us that the ferry tickets could be rare and advised to prebook the ferry before asking for a hotel at Kangaroo Island. So we immediately tried to book ferry tickets by phone but there always was a machine on the line only.

27th day:

We had breakfast in our hotel rooms and left Warnambool then. We drove on the Princes Highway to Adelaide, passing Port Fairy and Portland as like some large salt lakes. We were lucky to contact the Sealink office by mobilephone and booked the tickets for the ferry to Kangaroo Island. There were no other highlights during this long and tiring ride and so we all slept except the driver of course. When we had almost reached Adelaide we started to look for a hotel in our accommodation guide which we got in the im `Old Heidelberg` and even found a suitable one. We directly drove there and were lucky to get two rooms which where guests right had left yet. Then we went shopping into the city and later we sat to the pool; for dinner we simply moved a few meters to the barbecue. We relaxed the rest of the evening because we all were quite tired and no one was in the mood for anything else. We played billiard a while, planned our activities for the next days and booked two hotel rooms in Kingscote at Kangaroo Island.

28th day

After our continental breakfast in the hotel we took the car to the city center, parked it at a parking-garage and made a sightseeing walk. Adelaide has a marvellous city with lots of historic buildings and only a few multistoring buildings. The city was right from the start planned with a green belt of trees and parks around the center and the suburbs beyond. So it was not possible to build anything new in the historic center and we liked it as it was. We went shopping in the Rundle Mall and a walk thru the Botanic Gardens and had lunch at Pizza Hut...all you can eat. After lunch we returned to our car, bought something for a barbecue this evening in a supermarket nearby and brought it in our hotel. Then we went to Glenelg, a suburb of Adelaide located near the beach, comparable with St Kilda in Melbourne, but even more beautiful and not as crowded like Bondi Beach in Sydney. There was a nice beach, lots of restaurants and pubs and small whopee with a great water slide. Of course we tried this slide for a while; they had four chutes with various length and different speeds. In one chute two bends seemed to be calculated a bit barely but it was really great fun. After this we went to Montefiore Hill Lookout where we had a wonderful view about Adelaide and its suburbs. For dinner we sat around the barbecue again and so we had a very pleasant evening.

29th day:

For this day we had tickets for the ferry to Kangaroo Island. It departed at 3 p.m. from Cape Jervis, so we could spend the whole morning for other things. We went to the Fleurieu Peninsula to the McLaren Vale, one of the wine growing areas in South Australia. As we already did in the Hunter Valley we tasted various wines in different wineries. Then we drove to Jervis Bay where we wanted to have lunch. But they only had the ferry landing stage there, a gas pump and a hotel. So

we had lunch in the hotel and enqueued the cars waiting for the ferry at 2 p.m. When the ferry boat had docked a very precise piece of work started, because 28 cars and some trailers had to fit the small storage place. The crossing took about two hours. When we arrived at the island we went to the visitors center first, but they had already closed. So we went to Kingscote next where we found our hotel at once. We made a short turn thru the town to get an overview and went back to our hotel for dinner then. But actually we wanted go to Seal Bay watching sea lions yet. So we asked the waitress how long it would take us to get there and when the last guided tour starts. The girl was quite natty and gave them a call at once. Unfortunately the last tour was to start in fifteen minutes but it takes about two hours to get to Seal Bay. So we rejected this for today and got more time for dinner this way. We just joked around with the waitress and finally asked her about places for watching platypuses, because we had read about. She called several service offices again but could not get any precise information. But another waitress knew about this very well and told us that we had to be there before sunrise and that it would take us about 2 1/2 hours and she told us about places where to watch koalas an penguins too. So after dinner (by the way: the best steaks of our whole travel) we started again to watch koalas. In a small forest of eucalyptus trees, nearby the street, we saw koalas in some trees indeed. Following we went back to Kingscote, where penguin nests were to be seen nearby the wharf. When we arrived there it was already dark and there was a guided tour watching the penguins. We followed this tour but the ranger was angry about this and told us that the other people had payed for this. So we went back to our hotel, we had already seen penguins at Philip Island anyway. Due to our intention to get up very early next morning we went to bed instantaneously.

30th day:

We got up at 2:15 a.m. and had breakfast in our room. The hotel stuff had been so kind to put it in the fridge the eve before; otherwise we would had to start without breakfast yet. About 3 a.m. we put our baggage into the car and started to Flinders Chase N.P. On the way we saw possums, kangaroos and wallabies beside the street and we had to drive very carefully not to knock down any. About two hours later we arrived at the ranger station but there was not anybody there at this time. We took our flashlights and and went to the walking track. On the way we saw a couple of kangaroos and even a koala mother with a joey on the back climbing up a tree. After walking a while we reached a pool where platypuses were said to be in. We found an information board with something written about this shy animals and we read that it would be necessary to set down motionless and silent to watch one in the early morning hours. So we set down on the shore and kept waiting. Sometimes there were small circles on the water indication a diving platypus. But we had to be patient for more than 1 1/2 hours unless a little platypus appeared and passed by nearby. In the meantime the sun had rised and so we went back to the ranger station. We could watch browsing kangaroos again and even the koalas were still on the tree they climbed up before; the joey clamped on the bole, the mother sitting on a knot eating eukalyptus leaves. Later we passed the visitors center where all visitors have to stop for paying the entrance fee. But still there was nobody there and we kept on driving...one of the advantages of getting up so early. We drove on a gravel road to Admirals Arch where we were lucky to watch a couple of seals. From there we went to the Remarkable Rocks. These rocks are remarkable indeed due to they were washed out from wind and water over millions of years; almost hollowed out. Then we went to Seal Bay and joined a guided tour to the beach, where sea lions were to be seen. The ranger told us that these are no seals as we could see on the light, coatless skin. There are only about 12,000 of them in the world, and even 5,000 here in South Australia. After this we drove to Penneshaw where we had lunch and waited for the ferry then. After the crossing we drove to Glenelg, where we watched out for a motel

for the next few days. We went to KFC for dinner, jumped in the hotelpool and the whirlpool then and went to bed finishing this long and straining day.

31st day:

After getting up this morning we went shopping to the supermarket first and went back to the hotel for breakfast then. Following we drove to Port Adelaide passing some nice beaches. There they have a big cargo port and a very nice historic center. We went to the visitors center first to get an overview about Port Adelaide and made a short scenic walk then. But they did not have so many attractions there right now and so we left again after a short time. We went to Mount Lofty Summit Lookout, a scenic lookout with a cafe and a tower from where we had a great view about the area of Adelaide and its suburbs. But we hardly did not reach this lookout due to less fuel. When we started in the morning I had already realized that we will run out of fuel if we do not fill up next. But I forgot about this and we hardly reached a gas station below the Mount Lofty (we read about a 70 liters tank in the car papers but filled up more than 86 liters...). We went to the city center of Adelaide for lunch and stopped for a bite at a greek restaurant in the Rundle Mall. After lunch we went separate ways for shopping. We (Doreen and me) saw that there is a switchback in the upper floor of Myers (a big shopping center) and some small roundabouts too. We bought a few souvenirs before we went to meet Karsten and Christina. They told us that they want to take the historic tram to Glenelg and so Doreen and me could use our car to get to Reynella, a southern suburb. I wanted to meet people there, who also use a C64 computer like I do and I already told them in an e-mail that I would come around for a visit these days. It was quite easy to find the house of the Gassons and they gave us a warm welcome. We talked for about one hour while having a cup of coffee and compared some news about our computers. Furthermore I bought the book "The Internet for C64/128 Users" which is the only internet-guide for the C64 and was written by Gaelyne Gasson. Then we went back to our hotel to meet the others. We strolled thru Glenelg a while and went to Fasta Pasta for dinner where we got really good food for less money. Then we walked along the busy beach and back to our hotel where we drunk some wine before we got to bed.

32nd day:

We had breakfast in our hotel again and then made a short shopping tour thru Glenelg. Following we went to the Barossa Valley, one of the biggest and best known wine growing areas of Australia, located north from Adelaide. We tasted several wines in different wineries until we got the idea of having lunch now. So we watched out for a nice restaurant. We did not like the first we found and kept on driving. In Tanunda we found the Cafe Heidelberg that is runned by Heinz and Doreen Baumert. Heinz originally came from Freital and enjoyed talking to someone from his former home. So we talked about fifteen minutes before he asked what we would have for lunch. After he took our order (of course we were excited of the many german meals offered here and ordered slaughters platter and Doreens special meal: Cordon Bleu) he came back with a free bottle of wine. From time to time he had to pay attention for the other guests of course but he always returned to us for a little talk. So he told us how he left East Germany, what he did since then and how he came to Australia. We kept on talking for a while, Heinz brought some glasses of portwine for tasting and showed us an article in an ADAC-travelmagazine where they had written about him and his restaurant. After the excellent meal he introduced his family to us and we talked some more. Originally we wanted to have a short stop only but we finally stayed there for three hours. We took some photos when we left and he gave a really big cake to us...to have it later. After this great experience we were not in the mood for tasting wines anymore. So we only visited th Seppeltsfiels

winery, the oldest winery in the Barossa Valley, and went back to Glenelg then. Here we jumped into the pool first and made some coffee then to have with the cake from Heinz. Then we packed up our baggage, because we wanted to fly to Alice Springs next day. We went to Fasta Pasta for dinner again and spent the rest of the evening in the hotel where we emptied our big pack of wine.

33rd day:

After breakfast we went to the airport where we returned our hired car and got on the plane to Alice Springs. When we arrived there we took the Shuttle Bus to Brits Australia, where we got our two Bushcampers. These vehicles have two 90-litres-tanks, optional 4WD, a camping roof, cooking facilities and dishes as like a shower, so that we could leave the main roads in the next days and we did not have to watch out for any accommodation. We went to Pizza Hit for lunch, where we had the all-you-can-eat-menue, then we went shopping and bought things we needed for the next days. In the visitors center we were told, that the Finke Gorge was closed due to extreme temperatures, only the track to the Palm Valley was accessable. We bought a permit for the gravel road to Kings Canyon and left Alice Springs then. Firstly we drove the Stuart Highway south until the road to Hermansburg branched off. From here there was only a small sealed strip on the road and even this ended after a few kilometers. At the branch to the Palm Valley road constructions were made, which means that they shifted the red dust a bit to patch some big potholes in the so called road. The Finke Gorge is the dry river bed of the Finke River and one will vainly look for a road there. Only a few hoop marks left by cars passing this area before showed the way. Sometimes we had to go thru rough boulders or dispered sand and sometimes we had to cross small rock plateaus but anyway we made only slow progress. But there still were other difficulties on the way to Palm Valley: fosses, rocks an some small watercourses from time to time. Without 4WD and sufficient ground distance any pull through would be impossible; it took us one hour for about 14 kilometers. When we finally reached the Palm Valley we chosed the short walking track due to the high temperature even in this afternoon. The valley got its name right. Here in the outback there were palm trees, that must look quite better after heavy rain. On the other hand the thousands of small flies that rushed on us at once and followed us all the time were really bugging. At sunset we went to a lookout were we met a guided tour which started travelling in early December following almost the same route like we did but continuing the travel till February. Following we went to a campground nearby where we had a short dinner in front of our bushcampers and went to bed then. But we could not sleep well due to the hotness in our cars.

34th day:

We got up at about 5:30 a.m. because we could not sleep anyway. We had a shower and had breakfast in the bushcamper to evade the flies coming up with the first rays of the sun. Then we drove trhu the Finke Gorge back to the gravel road on which we continued our travel to the Kings Canyon Resort. We arrived there at 10:30 a.m. parked our cars at the campground and spent the next two hours in the pool, because it was too hot for any other activity. Later we entered the cafe for lunch where we got a simple but quite good and surprisingly cheap meal. Then we jumped into the pool again, where seemingly most of the people rested at this time. Unfortunately we did not think to put our shoulders under water and so they were heavily burned in the afternoon... We drove to the Kings Canyon and walked the short track (about 30 minutes) into the canyon. The extreme heat and the flies made the hell out of this trip and so we were glad to get back into the pool after this, where we had a wonderful view over the canyon glowing red in the evening sun. We had our dinner in the bushcampers again and went back into the pool then, because this was the only place

where the heat was bearable, and stayed there up to about 10:00 p.m. In this night the temperature kept high again and so we turned our campers in the direction a little wind came from and left the doors open all night.

35th day:

We got up at 4:30 a.m., had breakfast in the bushcamper and went to the Kings Canyon then. At about 5:30 we started the steep ascent of the long walking track around the canyon. Even under normal conditions this was a torture, but the extreme temperatures made it the hell for us. This was why we started as early as possible carrying enough drinking water. By and by it got light and with the light came the flies. It took us about fifteen minutes to get up, where we had to make a little break due to a camera team taking some scenes of the sunrise for a Sydney-2000 promotion movie. We walked along the crest where we over and over again enjoyed the phantastic view. A small way from the main track brought us to the Garden of Eden, where we found water and a couple of palm trees. But the waterfall we read about being here we did not see, due to the extreme drought there was no waterfall there at all. We went back to the main track leading to the descent. There we met the guided tour from the Palm Valley again, starting the walk around the Kings Canyon in opposite direction now. We went back to the campground, jumped into the pool once more and drove to the Lasseter Highway then. So we came to the Ayers Rock Resort, passing Mount Conner and the Curtain Springs Roadhouse. We went into the visitors center first. We were told that the park is opened from 5 a.m., but in case of extreme heat the Uluru ascent may be closed at 8 a.m. due to safety reasons. Furthermore we could see photos from the ascent leading to the top at the westside of the rock providing no more security than a chain at the most steep part. We agreed that we should be in top form for this trip, what we would not be for sure when spending one more night in the camper. So we decided to rent a room with aircondition for this night. But firstly we went to Geckos Cafe for lunch. Then we went to the campground, rented a cabin with two sleeping rooms and jumped in the pool then; fortunately this pool was roofed by a sail. But suddenly something unexpected happened. Big black clouds came up and a slight rain began, changing into a tempest later. We jumped in our cars and hurried to the Uluru to be within this spectacle. Here the sky was deep black and the rain was heavy. After a while everything was over and we went to the westside of the rock to visit the ascent closer. There we saw a kangaroo skipping across the slippery rock. We drove around the rock and made some stops for visiting rock paintings here and watching the dingos there. When it got later we went to Sunset Point. Masses of tourists were already waiting here. When the sun goes down the Uluru changes its color from brown and pink into orange, red and finally grew. With the sun stepping deeper and deeper the shadows thrown by larger and smaller gaps are getting longer and longer and so the rock changes its look every minute. After this great experience we went back to the campground, had dinner in our cabin and went to bed very early...

36th day:

We got up at 3:30 a.m., had breakfast, packed up our baggage and were at the park entrance exactly at 5 a.m. We went directly to the Uluru but the ranger came not until sunrise (at 6 a.m.) to open the ascent. We did not try to climb the rock as quick as possible but made some small breaks. After the first part, where the chain ended, it became very windy so that some people did not go any further. After we had passed a narrow ridge the path became wider and we did not have any problems; the advantage of the wind was that there were no more flies anymore... The way to the top was about 1.6 kilometers but was hard to estimate because one can not see the whole way at any time. But

after an hour we had managed it. We were standing in the glaring light of the just risen sun and enjoyed the view over the environment and the silhouette of the Olgas in the west. After a while we stepped down again, particularly rearwards following the chain at the most steep part. It was at 8 a.m. and the sun right blinked over the rock when we arrived at our campers again; the ascent had been closed already. Here there was no breeze anymore and it was quite hot at once. We went to the Olgas and walked the seven kilometers long track thru the Valley of the Winds. In this valley it was so hot that we quite often sat down in the shade for resting a while and drinking some water. About 11:20 a.m. we finished this straining but marvellous walk. In the meantime this track had also been closed due to extreme temperatures and the ranger asked some questions to us (where we are from, if we had enough water with us, what other safety rules we knew etc.). He told us that the rain yesterday was the very first since a long time ant that it had cooled down some degrees therefore (maybe only 3 - t degrees, but we were very pleased about that). We went back to the Ayers Rock Resort and stopped at several lookouts on our way. When we came back to the campground we jumped into the pool again, went to the Pioneers Kitchen for lunch (the burger with the lot were absolutely delicious) and started to go back to Alice Springs. This time we did not go on the gravel road passing the Kings Canyon but drove the Lasseter Highway until we reached the Stuart Highway and then went north. Unfortunately we had to forgo the aircondition for the last 300 kilometers, because it was out of order since the branch to Kings Canyon. We still made a trip to a meteor crater and arrived in Alice Springs at about 8 p.m. We wanted to go to the airport first to reconfirm our flight to Darwin, but they had already closed. So we drove into the city center for shopping and watched out for a campground then. We sat around the barbecue for dinner and went to bed when the light got off at 10 p.m. This time we kept the doors of the camper open again and so the night was quite pleasant.

37th day:

After breakfast at the campground we went to the airport, where we reconfirmed our flight and asked for cars to hire in Darwin. After this we drove to Brits Australia to let them look for the aircondition. One of the mechanics inspected our car, found a torn v belt, replaced it and the aircondition started running again. We went to the airport once again and reserved at AVIS a 4WD in Darwin which was big enough for four persons and the baggage. Then we went to Hungry Jack's for lunch and after this we drove to the Eastern Mac Donald Ranges into the Ruby Gap Nature Park. There was a ranger station in Arltunga, where one should give notice for departure, when driving further into the park. So we did and entered a great 4WD track then. We went over rough and smooth, thru sand and dust, thru waterholes and creeks. When we tried to cross a small creek the wheels of our camper turned free and even though we had four driven wheels and locked the gear differential we did not get free again. The only way was to dig out the wheels by hand and put some stones from the river bed under it to move out backwards. We tried it again at a place where more stones were in the river bed and were lucky to cross the creek there. But after only few kilometers a river had washed so much sand ashore, that we would not risk a crossing there. So we turned back, only four kilometers before reaching Ruby Gap. But nevertheless it was an exciting, adventurous trip. We came back to the ranger station about 30 minutes after closing time but the ranger was still there and we could report back. He told us, that we would not have reached Ruby Gap anyway due to the river has flooded the whole track on the last kilometers and even experienced 4WD drivers would have had no chance there. We went back to Alice Springs, made a visit at Emily Gap on our way and went to Pizza Hut for dinner...all-you-can -eat of course. Then we parked our bushcamper at the campground and went to bed.

38th day:

We left the campground and went to McDonalds for breakfast. Following we strolled thru some souvenir shops in the city and returned our bushcamper to Brits Australia then. There we took the shuttle bus to the airport where we got into the plane to Darwin. At Darwin airport we got our reserved car, a Toyota Landcruiser. When we left the airport building we became aware at once, that we were in another climatic zone now, namely in the tropics. The weather was not as hot as in the outback but the humidity was even higher. While we drove into the city we looked for a suitable hotel in our accommodation guide. In the second hotel they still had two free rooms for A\$55 per double including breakfast. Furthermore they had a big, very neat pool and we liked it. After we checked in there we visited the city. After Darwin was destroyed in WW II the hurricane "Tracy" almost annihilated the city in 1974. Darwin was rebuilt completely new and so there are only a few historic buildings. In the main promenade we found the bureau of Singapore Airlines, where we reconfirmed our flight back home. Then we went to the visitors information, where they told us that all 4WD tracks are closed in the Kakadu N.P. - it's the wet season... In the evening we went to Sizzlers for dinner, where we had a great steak including the free salad bar. On the way back to our hotel we bought a big pack of wine in a bottle shop and spent the rest of the evening at the hotel pool.

39th day:

In the night heavy rain began and it continued even in the morning. After breakfast in the hotel we drove east on the Arnhem Highway. At Bark Hut Inn, a very snugly roadhouse, we stopped for lunch and made a trip into the Wildman Reserve to Shady Camp and the Wildman River Wilderness Lodge then. Following we drove until we reached the entrance to the Kakadu N.P. Here they also told us that almost all 4WD tracks were closed and that we had to take a plane to see the Jim-Jim-Falls and the Twin Falls (magnificent waterfalls and surely two of the most popular attractions of the park). We moved on to Jabiru and detoured to get to the visitors center. But it was already closed and so we went to a campground and rented a cabin there. There we spent some time in the pool and went in the BBQ kitchen nearby for dinner. After relaxing a while in the whirlpool we still drank some glasses of wine and went to bed finally.

40th day:

We went to a bakery in the morning to buy something for breakfast to have in our cabin. Then we drove to the Jabiru airstrip and booked a one hour scenic flight across the Kakadu N.P. with a Cessna. This flight was A\$ 100 per person but it was really worth it. We saw a couple of waterfalls (of course including the Jim-Jim-Falls and the Twin Falls) which were very impressive due to the heavy rainfalls in the last days. After this we went to Burdulba to the Iligadjarr Walk, where we reached the pool area after about one hour. There were some rockholes providing excellent swimming facilities. Unfortunately a group of tourists had just arrived so that we stayed there only for a short moment. We followed the creek for some meters and found a little waterfall where we could have a bath alone. After some really refreshing minutes we walked back to our car and went to Nourlangie Rock, where we saw some interesting aboriginal rock paintings. Suddenly we were overtaken by a cloudburst; it was not really unpleasant because it was quite a warm shower, but we were really soaked when we reached our car. It was just in the afternoon and we continued driving until we reached Cooida, where we rented a lodge. Then we entered a bistro for a short snack, jumped into the pool then and following drove to Jim-Jim Billabong. On the way we saw a pack of

dingos near the street that followed our car for a moment. But suddenly the road ended. Due to the heavy rainfalls of the last days the billabong had expanded for some kilometers and the new shore was right at the road. In the meantime it was dark and we could not see, how deep the road was flooded. So we decided to turn back to Cooinda and sat into the bar for dinner. On the way to our lodge we went to the reception and booked a Yellow Water Cruise starting at 7 a.m. next morning.

41st day:

Firstly we went into the shop to buy some cookies and a bottle of water, then we walked to the quay, where the boat tour on the Yellow River started. During the cruise we could see lots of waterfowls and a pair of seaeagles, but no crocodiles even if there are warning signs everywhere in the park. Our guide told us that crocodiles like to lie on the shore but now in the wet season the whole area is flooded and this is why we may not will see any crocodile. We got back to the quay, passing the flooded bus port, where only a few roadsigns stucked out of the water. We had breakfast in the snack bar and left Cooinda then. We drove out of the Kakadu N.P. towards Katherine but turned north when we reached the Stuart Highway at Pine Creek. After passing Adelaide River we left the Highway to get to the Litchfield National Park. We wanted to have lunch in the Rum Jungle Club in Batchelor. But we did not were members there, and so we had to sign the guestbook first, before they took our order. Then we entered the park. Even here all 4WD tracks were closed, but there were a lot of sights to be seen by using the sealed roads. We crossed the whole park first, to get to the other end to the Wangi Falls. On the way we visited the Magnetic Termite Mounds, which are built strictly in north-south line. Normally there are swimming facilities in the Wangi Falls pool, but due to the masses of water falling down there, the pool was closed for safety reasons yet. So we went to the Tolmer Falls and the Florence Falls next and took a bath in the Buley Rockhole. When the dusk began we left the park again and followed the Stuart Highway to Darwin. We checked in the same hotel as two days before and went to Sizzlers for dinner again. On our way back to the hotel we went to Woolworth for shopping. There a young pair of lovers asked us, what dip to prefer if we had the choice between herbal or smoked salmon dip. We spontaneous decided for salmon; the young man seemed to be very pleased and the girl agreed. They blandly thanked us and went away. A few minutes later we met them again, as they could not get agreement about the color of champagne glasses. And so they asked us again: uncolored or blue? Benath there were yellow glasses too, but these they did not want at all and so we told them to take the blue glasses. Later, when we looked for a pack of wine in the bottleshop, we met this pair again. They smiled and told us that this time they will pick the champagne themselves. When we were to pay our wine the young man hurried toward us and showed their choice: a blue and a yellow bottle. We joked around that they should have taken a blue and a yellow glass too, but when he asked if we would be so kind to change the glasses for them, we negated and told them goodbye. Who knows, what they still would have us to decide for them...

42nd day:

After breakfast we went shopping in the city. At about 11:30 a.m. we drove to the Darwin Crocodile Farm, because we had not seen any wild crocodile until now. While the feeding show we saw, how quick these seemingly lazy reptiles can move. We had a (quite delicious) croc-burger for lunch and drove back to Darwin, where went to the Aquascene in the afternoon. This is a bay, where thousands of fish come up with the high tide and vanish again with the low tide. This is a great attraction for many families with children, they can feed the fishes coming close to the hands there. After this we went back to our hotel and sat by the pool for a while. For dinner we went to

Tim's Surf & Turf, which we had found as we had watched out for a hotel. The menu was the same as like in Townsville at the Fisherman's Wharf and so we decided to order a seafood platter for one person per pair and it was enough for two again. We spent the rest of the evening by the hotel pool, where we emptied our big pack of wine before we moved to our rooms to pack our baggage.

43rd day:

We had breakfast in our hotel and went to the airport at about 8:30 a.m. The AVIS office did not open until 10:30 a.m. and so we checked in first and kept waiting to return our car. At 11:15 a.m. we started to Singapore. There we had to wait several hours for our next flight and therefore we had reserved a room at our stop on the way to Australia six weeks ago. But we did not reconfirm this (would have been too expensive by phone from Australia to Singapore) and so they did not have a reservation and we tried to spend the time otherwise. We strolled around the shops in both terminals and went to the Transit-Cafe for dinner. At 23:55 p.m. our flight to Frankfurt started.

44th day:

During this flight I could not get much sleep again. I watched some films and spent the rest of the time trying to win any points in the Nintendo tennis game. After a smooth flight we arrived in Frankfurt at 6:45 a.m. When we tried to check in the plane to Dresden they had problems with our baggage. We did not get any baggage-tickets in Darwin and could not tell the numbers of the pieces to transship to the clerk. So we hurried thru the whole airport and asked the clerk at the office of Singapore Airlines about the numbers (the Lufthansa stuff denied any call or other activities). With this numbers we hurried back to the gate and caught the flight just in time. The flight was straining too. Two passengers got into a dispute, because the one (a mid-aged businessman) did not want to switch off his Gameboy during the start, where all electronic equipment is to shut down. In Australia things run more smooth anyhow... And there was another surprise waiting in Dresden: Fog and a temperature of 10 degrees below zero...welcome back home.