



Australia Road Trip by Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle

17th January - 14th February 2024
By Avril Jackson



Toyota Hiace 'Welcab' supplied by Integrity Car Sales & Rentals, Sydney

Introduction

How we planned this trip and the obstacles we had to overcome.

The Plan: This was probably going to be the last time we traveled the 25 hours+ to Australia from the UK. Our daughter Vicki, has a profound disability with many medical needs. We would not put her through such a long journey without ensuring her maximum comfort and this would not be in economy class. The fares in business class were astronomical, until we saw an offer on the South Korean Airline - Asiana. At the time of booking, Asiana only flew a route to Sydney, so that would be our starting point. We sought to cover the 'Great Ocean Road' with time to see friends in Adelaide and other sights en route. So we needed a connecting flight onto Melbourne as we had visited Sydney before.



The Flight: In cases where a passenger has a high level of medical needs it is always prudent to inform the airline well in advance, and if necessary complete their 'MEDIF' form. As our daughter has no need, for example, of in-flight oxygen, we did not need to complete the MEDIF. However, as she is classified as a 'carry-on' we ensure that her hoisting sling is between her and her wheelchair so that ground handlers can use the sling loops to lift her if required, rather than having to make more personal contact. The 'Eagle Lifter' was used at London (Heathrow) Airport. These are available at Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport but sadly these are either in need of repair, or there are no staff trained how to operate the equipment.

Toyota Hiace 'Welcab' supplied by Integrity Car Sales & Rentals, Sydney

The Vehicle: Wheelchair accessible vehicles for rental in Australia tend to be the MPV type, such as a Kia Carnival which can be difficult if you are travelling to multiple destinations as the luggage sits in the back, behind the wheelchair passenger. We chose a Toyota Hiace Welcab where there is more space and the luggage is placed between the driver and the wheelchair passenger. Our quest to rent a vehicle in Melbourne was not possible as it was high season. So, no flight to Melbourne, we had to drive it from Sydney, which meant re-arranging our itinerary . The bad news about this was that we had to cut down the number of nights in Victoria and South Australia. The good news was that we were able to see the beautiful New South Wales Coast.

Accommodation: It is so easy to book all your accommodation through one of the online giants like booking.com or hotels.com . But beware - you are restricted to properties that have a commercial agreement with them, and they can and do apply some hefty fees if you need to change your booking (if you booked at the lowest price) . We made that mistake; in future we would book direct with the supplier. Despite approaches to specialist tour operators in the UK, who have a fabulous offering of accommodation and tour options, none could help us. It seems that these operators have a long way to go in satisfying the needs of the mobility challenged traveller.

Summary : On reflection, the itinerary was ambitious in the number of places visited, with some days spending 4-5 hours driving. This meant that a lot of accommodation stays were one or two nights only (partly due to the fact we could not rent a vehicle in Melbourne - see above) However, ignoring that, it was a great way to see this part of Australia. The option to take the Seoul stopover for five nights on the return journey was too long - the climate is cold in February, and three nights would have been sufficient.



Toyota Hiace 'Welcab' supplied by Integrity Car Sales & Rentals, Sydney

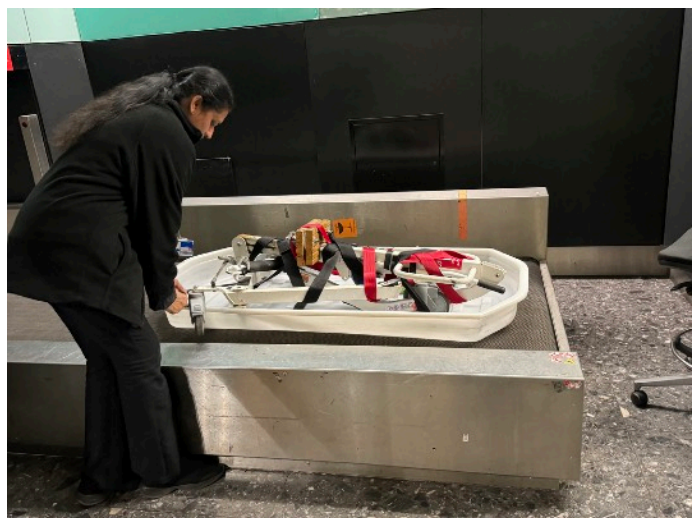
Day 1 - Wednesday 17th January 2024

Flight Heathrow-Seoul (Incheon)

Travelled up to Terminal 2 Heathrow and checked in to our Asiana flight, business class. Our daughter Vicki has a profound disability and is a permanent wheelchair user.

It took over half an hour to check our bags and establish that we were able to access Vicki's pre-assigned seat with the Eagle Lifter* (* a very special piece of kit to load passengers with little or no mobility, see https://www.enablemytrip.com/search_results?sid=4&q=haycomp).

Due to Vicki's disability we would not put her through any discomfort for such a long journey. It was the very reasonable price which convinced us to take this trip which Vicki would not tolerate in economy.





The 'Eagle lifter' had been ordered but the check in staff had little knowledge of how it works. Your seat has to be on the left hand side of the aircraft, the same side as you enter. No problems through security, the usual interest shown in Vicki's feeds and electronics, especially the portable oxygen

concentrator. We had a comfortable hour in the business lounge, what a long walk to get there.

Some of the images show our 'Oxford Portahoist' which doubles as a baggage trolley, folds up and is checked into 'oversize; baggage. All essential medical equipment is not counted in your baggage allowance. The hoist weighs 30 kilos .

The ground agents were great; they created a slight delay on the flight leaving but Vicki had the best service, slowly and carefully transferred from wheelchair to seat. The Eagle lifter uses Arjo compatible slings not the usual Oxford compatible that most people use in the UK . There must have been 8 personnel assisting!



We have never travelled with Asiana before, it's a South Korean Airline with all South Korean staff. As the aircraft reverses from the stand the staff bow and greet every passenger individually. Service was excellent. Like all passengers, Vicki has to sit up for take off and landing, well padded with business class pillows; as soon as the seat belt light goes out we can get up and lie her down on her go flat seat.

Today's Australian Slang:
POKIES = Gaming Machines (Pub Type)

Day 2 - Thursday 18th January 2024

Flight Seoul (Incheon) - Sydney



Today's Aussie Slang: ANKLE BITER = Child

This is where the time difference gets confusing. The flight Heathrow to Incheon, Seoul, South Korea was 12 hours and the time difference is 9 hours. We set off at 20.30 , travelled 12 hours and arrived at Incheon at 17.45 the next day. The meal on leaving was dinner and the meal on arriving was dinner too. The total time difference between Heathrow and Sydney is 11 hours so quite easy from a medication point of view for Vicki; Vicki has similar meds at 07.00 and 19.00 so I continued to give meds approximately 12 hour interval. Vicki's meds are all in tablet form so very easy to fit into hand luggage.

The ground handlers at Incheon were so polite and respectful to Vicki. She travels with a hoist sling to make transfers from seat to chair comfortable for her and minimise need for actual personal contact. Vicki just needs 2, 3 or 4 people to lift her using the hoist sling straps. We were off the flight only a few minutes after all the other passengers. Incheon airport is clean and very modern. I'm guessing passengers with a wheelchair, and all the medical kit of oxygen concentrator,

suction machine, feed pump, nebuliser with all the chargers etc are rare.

To make it more complicated Vicki had her Empulse wheelchair power wheel with her. Read about it here: <https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../wheelchair-power-assistance> .

The actual wheel was in the main luggage and the battery pack in the hand luggage. This caused a nightmare. My husband managed to get a picture on his phone of the Empulse, which was examined, swabbed, photographed and studied by the whole of security. We sat in the business lounge for the short wait between flights and were still being questioned about the Lithium battery for the power pack on the wheelchair.

There are very clear guidelines issued by IATA (International Air Transport Association) regarding the carriage of lithium batteries. See here:

<https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../IATA--Battery-Powered...>

Vicki was assisted onto the second Asiana Airlines flight - the double decker Airbus A380 - swiftly by the same ground handling team. This was Seoul to Sydney, another 10 hours and 2 hour time difference. More excellent service. In business Vicki has to sit on her own, the only seats that are in twos are in the centre with very little space to access them, not enough for Vicki to be lifted through. We are able to see Vicki across the aisle and attend to her when necessary but there are challenges, like if the seat belt sign goes on due to turbulence and Vicki needs suction.



Day 3 - Friday 19th January 2024

Arrive Sydney, drive to Wollongong (53 miles)

Today's Aussie Slang: 'Carrying on like a pork chop': Used to describe someone who is behaving in a silly, stupid or childish way and making a scene.

We have arrived in Sydney finally! It's 10.00, no problems with luggage reclaim - the mobile hoist arrived in the 'oversized baggage area' - not like all other luggage, on the carousel. The sun is out, the sky is blue and it's warm. We booked a Toyota Hiace Welcab Wheelchair Accessible Van through [Integrity Car Sales & Rentals](https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../integrity-car-sales-rentals). <https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../integrity-car-sales-rentals>



We are met by Ben in the airport, really friendly and helpful. The Aussies drive on the same side of the road as the UK and this is a familiar vehicle for us. The vehicle comes with its own blue badge, which is accepted in all states.

We are booked into an accessible apartment 'Adina' at Wollongong. 60 miles, out of Sydney and a drive south on the

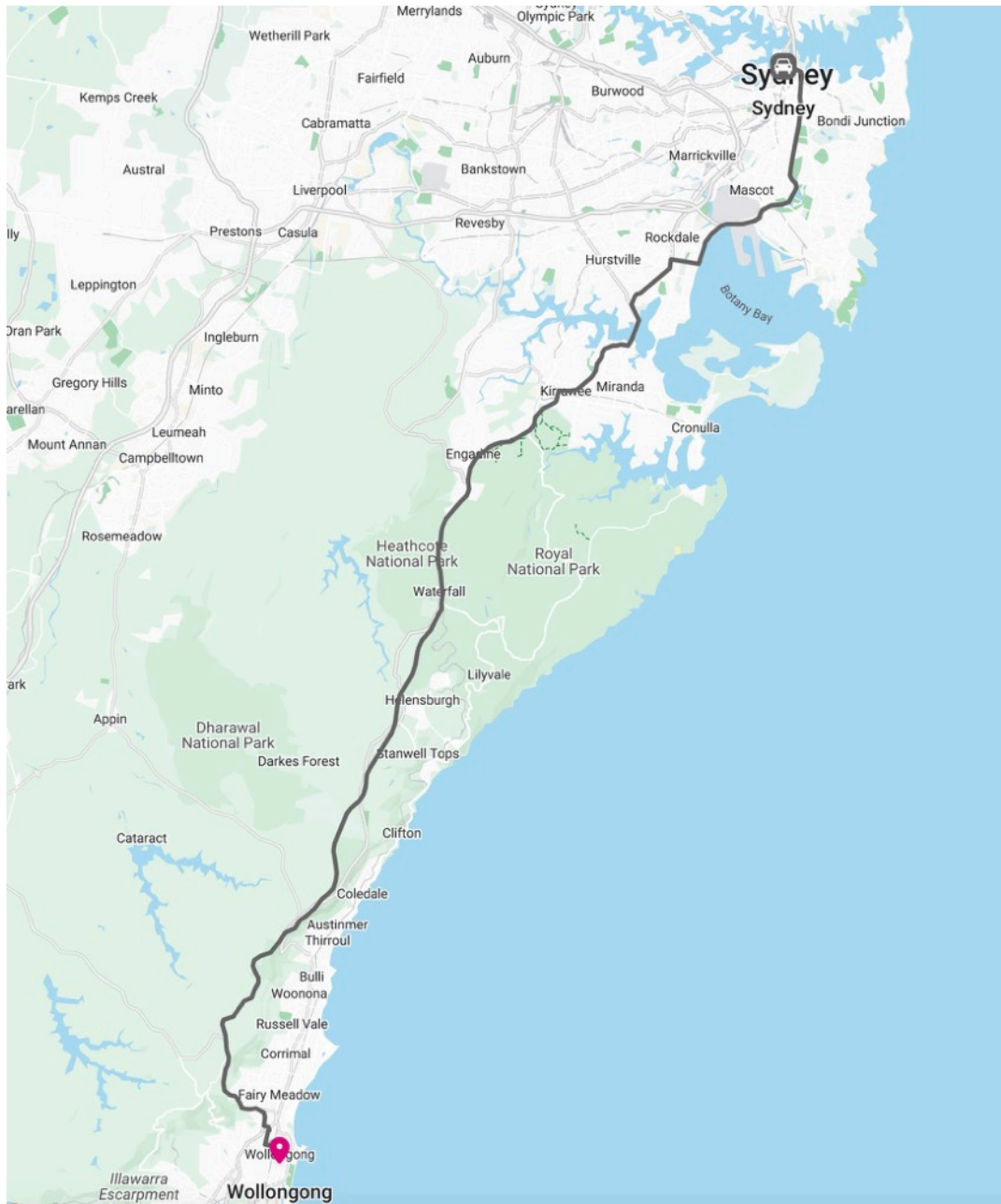
Princes Highway. The colours are vibrant when you arrive from a grey UK, the grass looks greener, the sky is bluer and the ocean is spectacular.

The Adina Apartments <https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../accommo.../adina-apartments> were just what we needed for a one night comfortable stay. The apartment was clean and offered us loads of space, and with a full kitchen as well, we self-catered for meals.

As we didn't have the energy to go out to eat we picked up a few bits at the nearby Aldi,. Food is about twice the price of the UK, fruit and veg is mostly Australian and about three times the price. The on site car park is really handy, but if



your vehicle is over 1.9m high (ours was 2.26m) it will not fit. Happily there was a disabled space right outside the property.



Day 4 - Saturday 20th January 2024

Drive Wollongong to Jervis Bay (70miles) then onto Bermagui (133 miles)

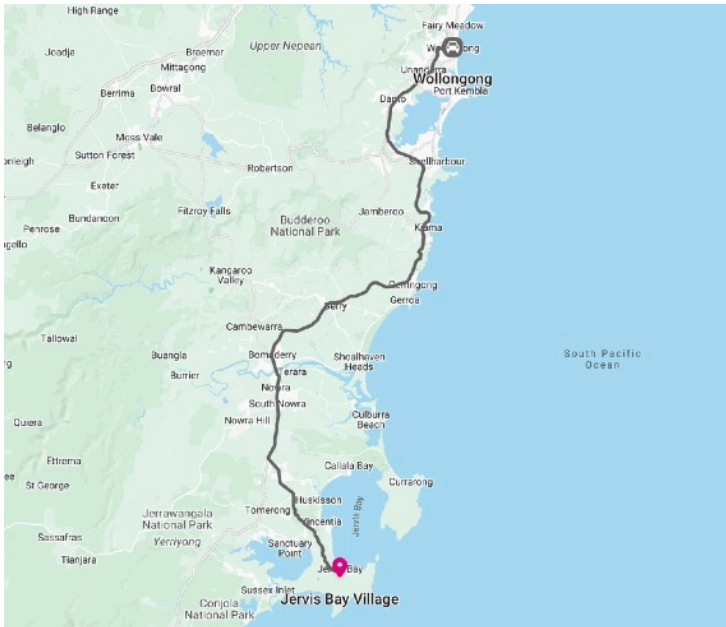
Total: 203 miles .

Today's Aussie Slang: ESKY - An insulated container that keeps things cold.'

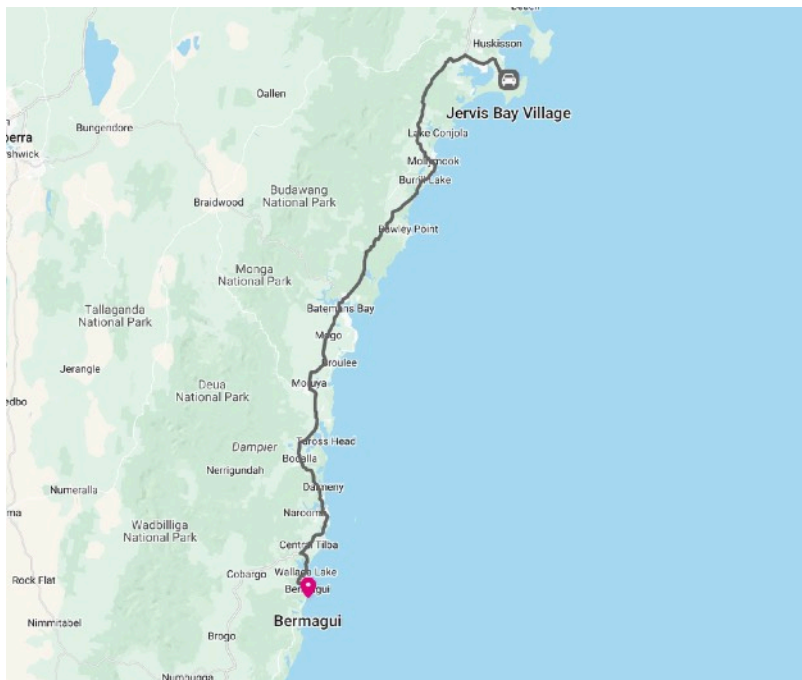
Adina Apartment Hotel, Wollongong : The early morning dawn chorus is so different to home so we had the patio doors open to listen.

Yesterday was hard going in a jet-lag fog, we all stayed awake as long as we could then sort of slept. Today was a drive from Wollongong to Bermagui, 268 miles with a stop at seven mile beach and Green Beach, Jervis Bay - a beautiful area.

Most Australian stops seem to be free parking with toilets available, picnic tables and flies. Apart from Jervis Bay where you have to pay, no flies here today, too windy.



Our accommodation in Bermagui is called the 'Elite Apartments'. Quiet and semi-rural buthmmm....., the sheets were well laundered and the shower had power. Plenty of space though, but the property needs a bit of an update. We were pleased to leave after this one night stop.



Day 5 - Sunday 21st January 2024 Drive Bermagui to Lakes Entrance (210 miles)

Today's Aussie Slang: HARUMPHING : To get about the house all day in your pyjamas and doing nothing of any great interest, usually after a big night out!

We left our dubious 'elite' accommodation early and set off towards Lakes Entrance in Victoria.



Aussie roads have American style signs for directions, warning signs for kangaroo and wombat areas, some information signs mostly about power napping, but one delightful one to discourage littering "Hey, Tosser!...." , and another one "Don't Drive Like a W-Anchor" . Direct and to the point.

HEY TOSSER!
Put it in the bin

We have driven for hours and only seen deer cross the road. Our van has been the right vehicle for this journey - we chose the Toyota Hiace Welcab as it allows us to place

the luggage in the middle of the vehicle, with Vicki on the rear, so that when we stop we do not have to unload all our kit to get Vicki out, which would be the case if we rented the smaller MPV vehicles such as the Kia whereby the wheelchair passenger travels behind the driver, with the luggage at the back. We rented from Integrity, who are based in Sydney. <https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../integrity-car-sales-rentals>

We stopped at a supermarket and picked up a picnic. Another hour later we pulled into a picnic area well away from the road. My husband went to use the facilities only to find that the bush toilet above ground looks like a toilet with a lid but when you lift the lid it is a hole in the ground, filthy, stinky and only attractive to flies. I think it is called a 'dunny'.

The Drummer picnic area looked idyllic, surrounded by rainforest, barbie available, bench tables, a gentle breeze, sun coming through the trees. We got Vicki out of the car, collected our picnic and sat at a table. Before we had chance to take the food out, there was a buzzing in the bush and every fly for miles around came to join us. Huge flies. That was a lesson and we won't that mistake again.



We arrived at the Comfort Inn at Lakes Entrance Victoria for a late lunch. It was the only place where we could not secure a d a p t e d accommodation but we managed. We had a walk along the waterfront enjoying the sunshine and the sights and ice cream.

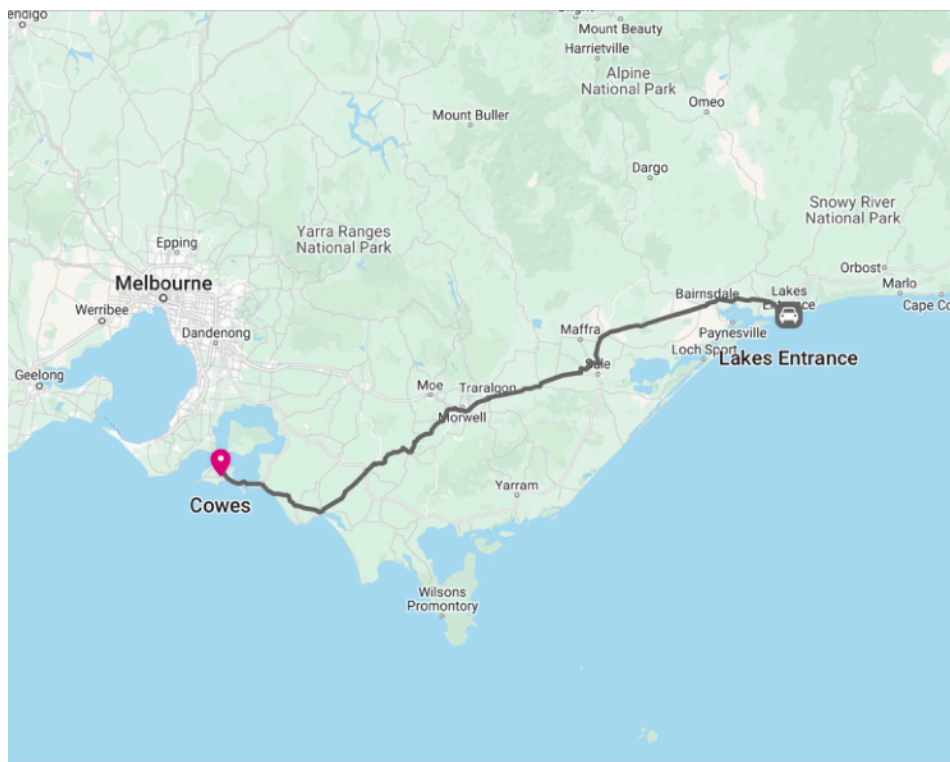
Day 6 Monday 22nd January 2024

Lakes Entrance to Cowes (for Philip Island, Ventnor) 205 miles

Today's Aussie Slang: FAIR SUCK OF THE SAUCE BOTTLE : The phrase generally means that you want to be treated fairly.

This morning we set off early for the 5 hour journey to Phillip Island, stopping at Rosedale Bakery on the way. We have discovered the amazing offerings in some of the town bakeries. Aussies seem to love

their pastries and pies! The roads are mostly easy to drive with general country road speed limits at 100kph, with little traffic.



The road signage is very helpful. For example, all sharp bends have a maximum speed limit warning, so you are in no doubt as to how severe the upcoming bend

may be (in the UK , in the main, we seem to have just chevrons) .



At Cowes, close to Philip Island , we checked into the Seahorse Motel, really good sized room and well adapted. Nice and spacious, clean and bright - a great room for our family.

On a road trip like this, motels really fit the bill - they are only for a 1-2

night stay, and the rooms generally sleep up to 4 people, and come with a kitchen (some more comprehensive than others) and often a washer and drier as well . So often , a hotel's policy (be it health &



safety or otherwise) dictates that 'accessible' hotel rooms can only accommodate a maximum of two people; as we were a party of 3, many hotels we considered were simply not possible.



The Seahorse Motel <https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../accommoda.../seahorse-motel> is in a pretty spot, and an easy walk into town , which has plenty of shops , cafes and restaurants.

Day 7 Tuesday 23rd January 2024

In Cowes (for Philip Island, Ventnor)

Today's Aussie Slang: SHE'LL BE APPLES - It will be all right.

This morning we enjoyed a walk along the beach and the pier in Cowes, Philip Island and then through the town for a good lunch, excellent fish. and picked up bakery sweets. The weather this morning was quite cloudy but in hours the sun came through and it was beautiful.

In the early evening we set off to see the penguin parade at Ventnor, the evening we were there, some 717 penguins were logged as having come ashore after dusk and walk up the sand dunes to their burrows for the night. The wheelchair viewing area was well penned off from the other 2500 visitors. Numbers are strictly controlled and this evening was fully booked. We had a good view of family groups emerging from the ocean and heading up the beach, up the sand dunes and under the boardwalk where we sat.

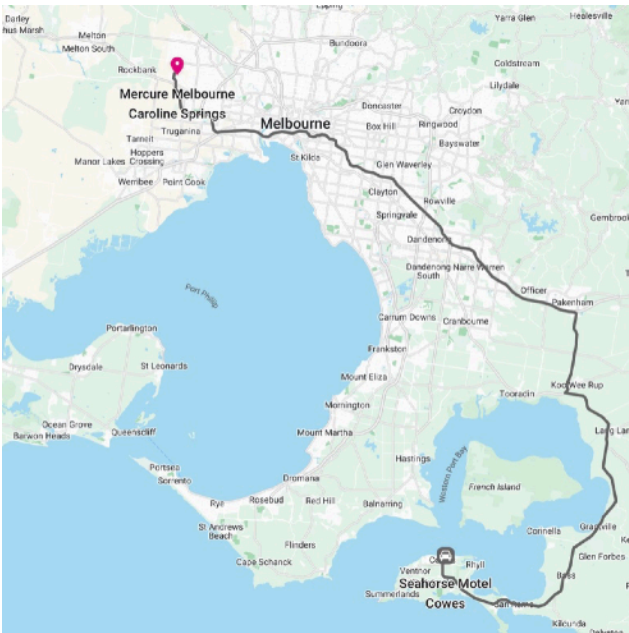
These are 'little penguins' that spend the daylight hours in the ocean and night in burrows. Tonight the penguins were expected at 21.00 but it has been a bright day so dark came later. It's a very cute sight. We also saw wallabies and what we think was a bandicoot, (difficult to see properly as it was getting dark) although the latter I had to look up as I'd never seen them before. All photography is banned after 20.30 to protect the penguins from flashes so no photos of the sight.



Day 8 Wednesday 24th January 2024

Cowes to Melbourne (Caroline Springs) 105 miles

Today's Aussie Slang: DUCKS ON THE POND! - Look out - female approaching! A warning cry from a male as a signal to other men that a woman is approaching a traditionally all-male environment.



Today we drove Philip Island to Melbourne, Caroline Springs. The traffic in Melbourne was the worst we had seen yet, added to by the roadworks. Melbourne skyline is stunning.

Caroline Springs was named after Caroline Chisholm, the nineteenth century philanthropist who established a series of shelters for emigrants along the road (now the Western Freeway) to the Ballarat gold diggings. The whole area has been a development which was started in 1999, and it has the

feeling that the whole area has been designed, rather than has grown 'organically'.



As Vicki is tube fed and on a liquid 'Fresenius' feed, for long holidays like this I have started to get Vicki's feed in powdered form, it's around a quarter of the weight and volume of liquid feed. It takes up a fair bit of space in the cases but quickly you have lots of available space in the baggage, and there is no chance of boxes of liquid feed getting damaged.

We started the trip with 5 suitcases, 3 medium and 2 small - only one which contained clothes.

We stayed at the Mercure at Caroline Springs, a 25km distance outside of Melbourne on a lake.

Check out the details here: <https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../mercure-melbourne..>

Great facilities in a room that was not accessible. We had a choice, an accessible room with grab rails and a huge bathroom but no kitchen or washer dryer or a 'non accessible' room with a smaller bathroom (which was just about accessible in a wheelchair but no grab rails) but great kitchen and facilities. We had a walk around the lake and shops, then to keep us awake we went late evening shopping - didn't fancy buying the 'Vegemite Cookbook' . The temperature is perfect for walking around in the evening.

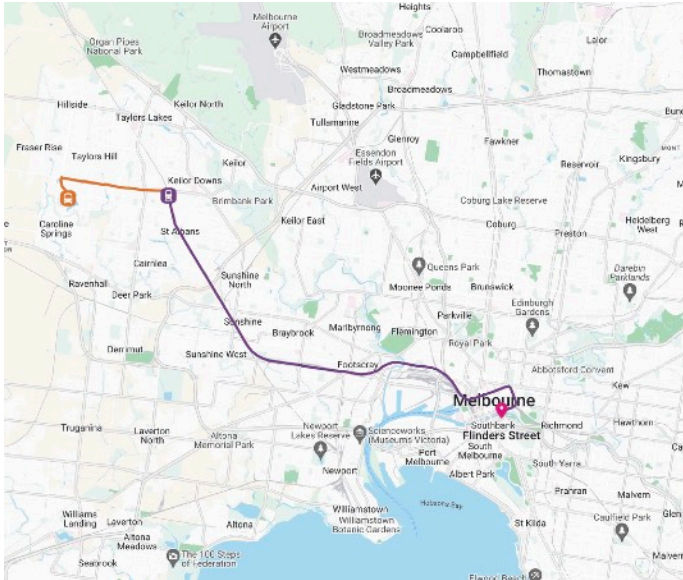


Day 9 Thursday 25th January 2024

Day in Melbourne from Caroline Springs

Today's Aussie Slang : SANGER = Sandwich

Today we went into Melbourne for the day, we drove to Caroline Springs railway station to catch the train from there. The train was the



option as we believed that parking may be an issue in the centre of Melbourne, but once there we realised that many of the disabled spaces were available. However the main trunk routes in and out of Melbourne were quite often grid-locked with many road works in play.

The trains were amazing with 4 generous wheelchair spaces in the carriage we chose ; great service with a ramp from the



conductor. At Southern Cross railway station we transferred to the metro to Flinders Street station.

Our first trip was a walk alongside the Yarra River, walking because there were no wheelchair accessible boats at all to do the river tour. Lovely views with University rowing crews practising. My husband wanted to find the exact spot where some frames of Kylie Minogue's video "I've to to be certain'" in 1988 was shot! Full video here: <https://youtu.be/5cYQfqwjMVY?si=6s12R4tfzQJPrIXzSo> we had to have the obligatory photo to show that we had found the spot. The skyline has changed a bit since 1988.



We headed up hill from the river to the Botanic Gardens to Government House. There are lots of memorials in the huge park. It was great to have the added assistance of the fifth wheel motor on Vicki's wheelchair as some of the gradients were quite steep.(see <https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../wheelchair-power-assistance>) .

We walked along the South Bank embankment and went up the Melbourne Skydeck building. 38 seconds to travel 88 floors, popping ears all the way. What a view. It was so clean and clear, sharp intake of breath from Vicki at her first view of the height. We spent ages taking in the views.

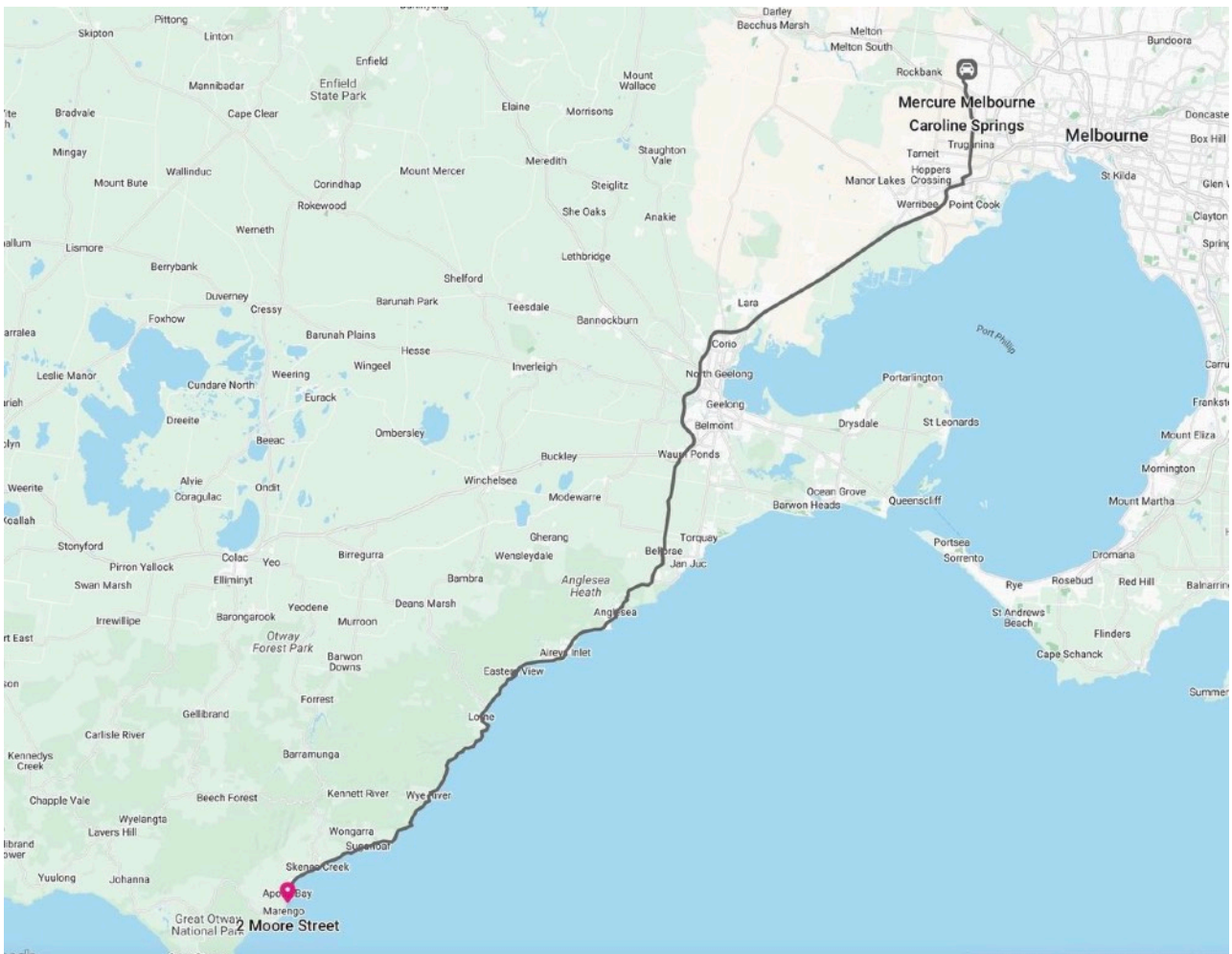


Day 10 Friday 26th January 2024 - It's Australia Day!

Melbourne (Caroline Springs) to Apollo Bay 113 miles

Today's Aussie Slang : AUSSIE SALUTE - The gesture commonly deployed all across Australia to deter bush flies from the human face.

We left Melbourne and started on the drive towards the The Great Ocean Road to Apollo Bay along Surf Coast Highway.



One of the main obstacles when planning this trip was the scarcity of accessible accommodation in hotels or in properties with the best views, location etc. Most accessible hotel rooms will only take two people - we are a party of three and we both need to be in the same room or apartment due to Vicki's care needs.

Time and time again we were told that three people in a room was not allowed due to 'health & safety ; or fire regulations'. Motels en route overcame this problem, with larger accommodation for up to four people. These motels, although not luxury or high end grade accommodation, certainly fit the bill for us.

The drive to Apollo Bay was very scenic and spectacular with lots of bends but tedious at times with so many people on the road being a national holiday. The route passes through the pretty town of Geelong, and the small resort, Torquay. Our first major traffic jam was on the approach to Lorne, traffic was dreadful and the hold ups were mainly caused by drivers looking for that elusive parking spot.

We arrived at the Apollo bay Motel & Apartments (<https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../apollo-bay-motel-apartments>) at 14.00, excellent apartment with a huge bathroom. Went in search of lunch but everywhere was packed. Ended up in the supermarket and shocked at the prices. Later we took Vicki on the beach. There is a path part way to the sea and the foreshore seems solid. There's just a few yards of soft sand between. Going downhill was okay.

We had a walk and a paddle and headed back. Fortunately a kind stranger came to help us onto solid path and then directed us to the Apollo Bay Coastal Trail. We walked along the boardwalk and sat a while at a viewpoint to watch the surfers and the sun go down. The weather was quite cool with a strong breeze off the sea.



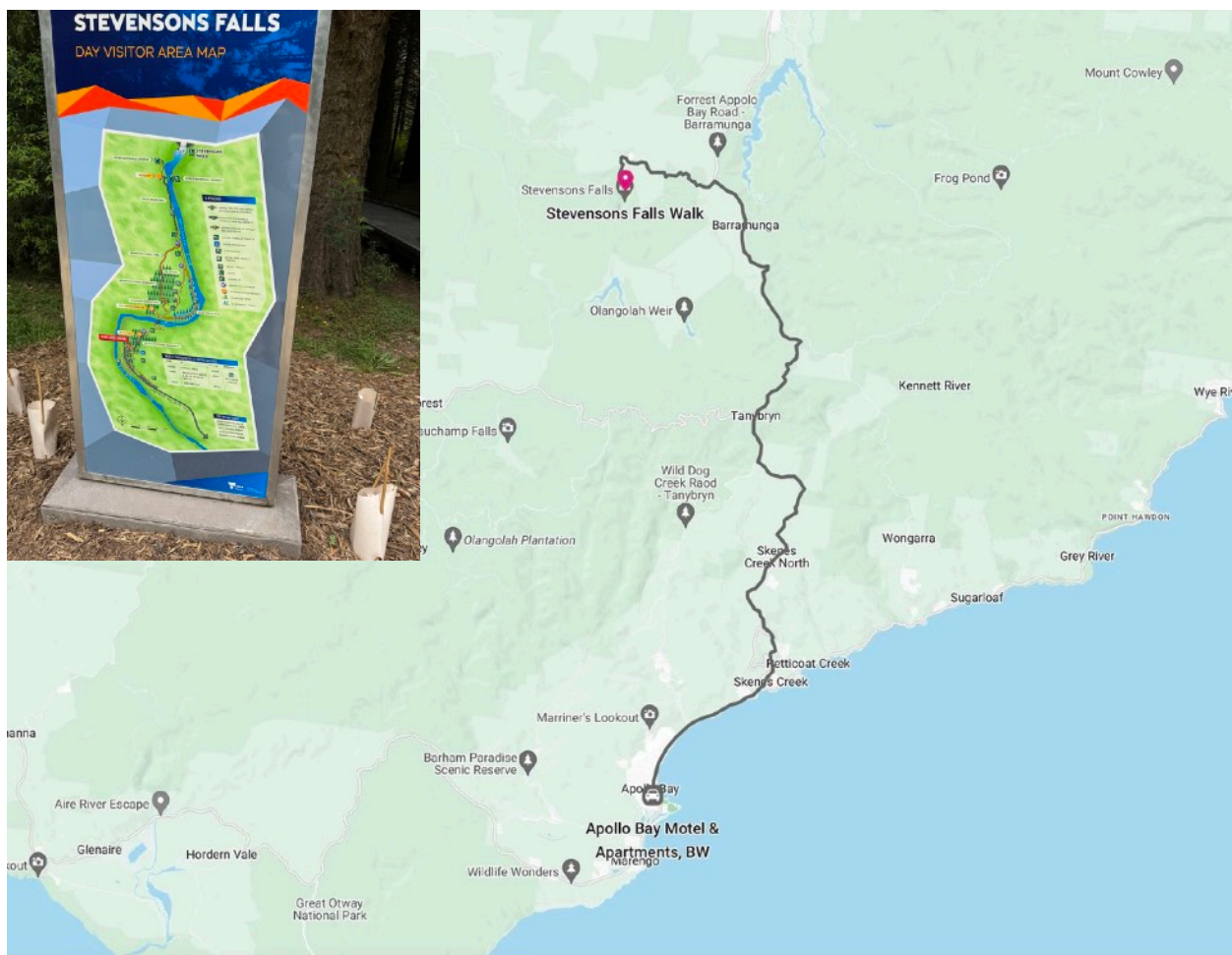
Day 11 Saturday 27th January 2024

**In Apollo Bay - Excursion to Stevenson's Falls,
Barramunga 43 miles round-trip**

Today's Aussie Slang: DRONGO – a Fool, ‘Don’t be a drongo mate’

We stayed at the Apollo Motel & Apartments in Apollo Bay for 2 nights (<https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../apollo-bay-motel-apartments>) so today we drove up into the hills to Stevenson’s Falls. (<https://www.exploreoutdoors.vic.gov.au/.../stevensons-falls>)

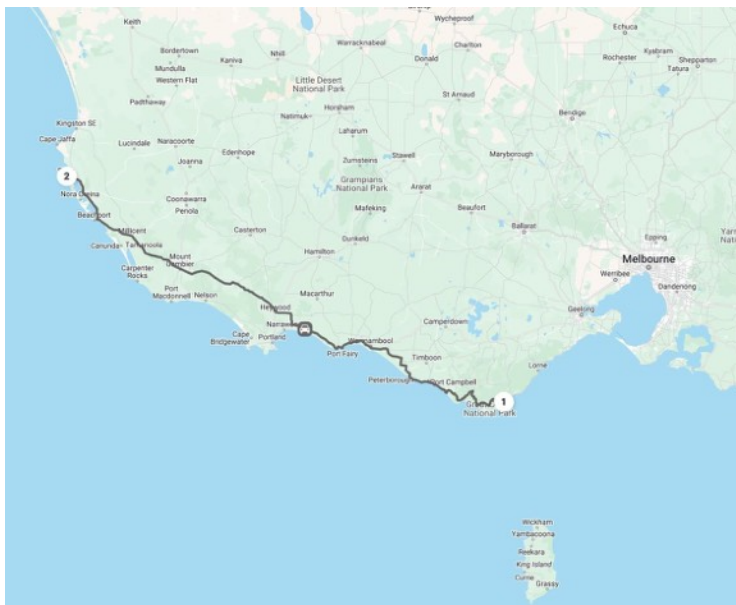
There’s a wheelchair accessible path to the waterfall, and it is really well thought out. Lots of people for Vicki to watch, climbing the rocks, picnicking and playing. Later we had another walk around the marina at Apollo Bay.



Day 12 Sunday 28th January 2024

Apollo Bay to Robe - 298 miles

Today's Aussie Slang : BOGAN - a person whose speech, clothing, attitude and behaviour are unrefined or unsophisticated.



A day of driving. The route took us up through the Great Otway National Park (<https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/.../great-otway-national-park>) where the temperature dropped to 13 degrees celsius (later that day in Robe it would be sunny and 26 degrees). Saw a koala and a wallaby along the road and thought this was a good sign that we would see more.



We stopped at the 12 Apostles (<https://tinyurl.com/2a3jzwbk>) and did the wheelchair friendly walk under the main road to the viewpoint. It was wet and cold! The sun came through just for a photo. Today was a long long long drive. We broke the drive to stop for lunch.

We arrived at the Lakeview Apartments in Robe at 16:00 hours. (<https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../lake-view-motel-apartments>). The motel offered a spacious accessible standard room with a good sized roll-in shower— all rooms have a view of the lake. The lake view was beautiful and the sun was shining. There are some good accessible paths nearby if you fancy a walk.

This place should have been peaceful, but it was the last day of the holidays and the teenagers were making the most of it! Water skiing, and having a party. In such a quiet area, the noise travelled. The wheelchair van is holding up well !

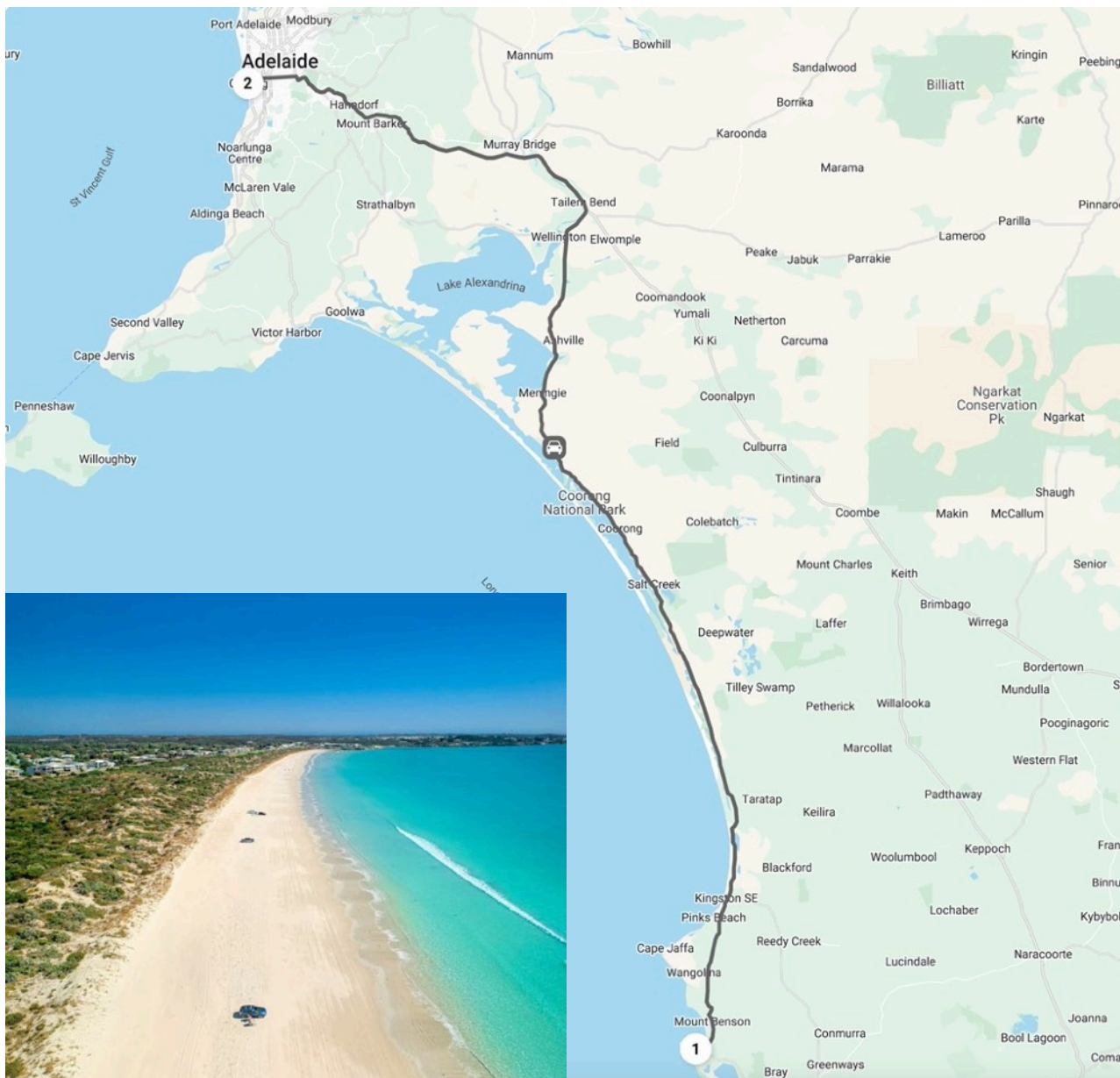
(<https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../integrity-car-sales-rentals>)

Day 13 Monday 29th January 2024

Robe to Adelaide (Glenelg) 213 miles

Today's Aussie Slang : THONGS – Flip Flops. Not to be confused with skimpy underwear.

Four hours of driving today from Robe to Adelaide. The roads were mostly straight and empty, with some beautiful views en route of some



of the coastal areas (<https://southaustralia.com/.../attraction/long-beach-robe>) on the way to Adelaide. We arrived at the Stanford Grand



Hotel in Glenelg at 14:00 hours.(<https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../acc.../stamford-grand-hotel>)

We checked in to find that if you are disabled , all the accessible rooms are on the third floor with 'city view.' Oh no, the view is the wall of the multi-storey car park! We also found that if you have a high disabled vehicle you cannot access the Stamford Grand car park.

We went outside to look at suitable parking, we must have a guardian angel because in the council car park was a parking attendant. She told us that we could park free in any council car park as we had the appropriate disabled parking permit (it was supplied by Integrity Car Sales & Rentals).

The Stamford Grand outdoor pool is brand-new and refurbished around the area but there is no access for a wheelchair. There are five steps up to the pool and the pool area.

We called at the front desk and asked about pool access, we commented on the car park and the room view. Then we asked for the



manager. Lovely man turned all our problems around. He moved us to a room on the ninth floor with a view of the sea and the balcony.

Although this room (No.908) was not designated as 'accessible' we had enough space to care for Vicki, and we were able to access the bathroom with her mobile

(hoyer type) hoist. This cheered us up. We had a walk around the area.



Dinner in the hotel and an ice cream at a 'gelataria' and walk along the beach finished our day.

Day 14 Tuesday 30th January 2024.

A day in Glenelg, South Australia

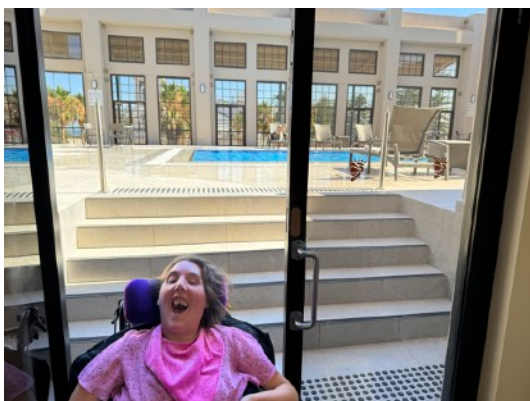
Today's Aussie Slang : FURPHY – rumours or stories that are improbable or absurd.

Today we went in search of books. First, I bought a full price Lee Child Jack Reacher novel at a bookstore. What a price shock! So then we asked where to find the charity shops - these are called 'Op Shops' (Op for Opportunity) in Australia. We walked up the road and bought a selection from the various Op Shops in the Glenelg area. The whole area is quite busy with a good choice of restaurants and bars, and you are never too far from the beach.



As we will be in Glenelg for a few days we were pleased that was no worry about parking charges. As mentioned in the previous day's post, the disabled parking permit is essential, especially as our van will not fit in the hotel's car park. Street parking is quite restricted as it is such a busy area.

We revisited the swimming pool at the hotel to see if it would ever be possibly for Vicki to access the pool area, and the answer was a definite 'no'. Bearing in mind that the whole pool area was redesigned very recently, with no consideration or thought about accessibility at all.



We had lunch and then in the afternoon we had a rest - it was nice not to have to think of a long road journey today - so that we were ready for our meeting with our old friends from the UK who we haven't seen for many years. They

came over to see us, at the Stamford Grand ; we had a drink in the hotel and then we walked to the nearby Marina and chose an Indian restaurant to eat in. Vicki had never met our friends before as we haven't seen them for 30 years. We had a brilliant evening.

Day 15 Wednesday 31 January 2024

A trip by tram from Glenelg into Adelaide

Today's Aussie Slang : ARVO – abbreviation for 'afternoon'

Today we caught the tram from right outside of our hotel, the Stamford Grand ,(<https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../acc.../stamford-grand-hotel>) into the centre of Adelaide.

We looked for the Botanic Gardens which should have been by the tram stop however, maps took us a very long way.



The Botanic Gardens were a treat, not just the outdoor plants and lake, but also the rainforest indoor that had a special photographic exhibition. The tram is very easy with Vicki. Once the driver sees you. He gets the ramp out. He checks where you are going to and ensures that he has the ramp ready for you to get off the tram. We had to change trams but this was very easy. Only a four minute wait. The trams have allocated areas for wheelchair users. Our trip into town took over an hour each way.

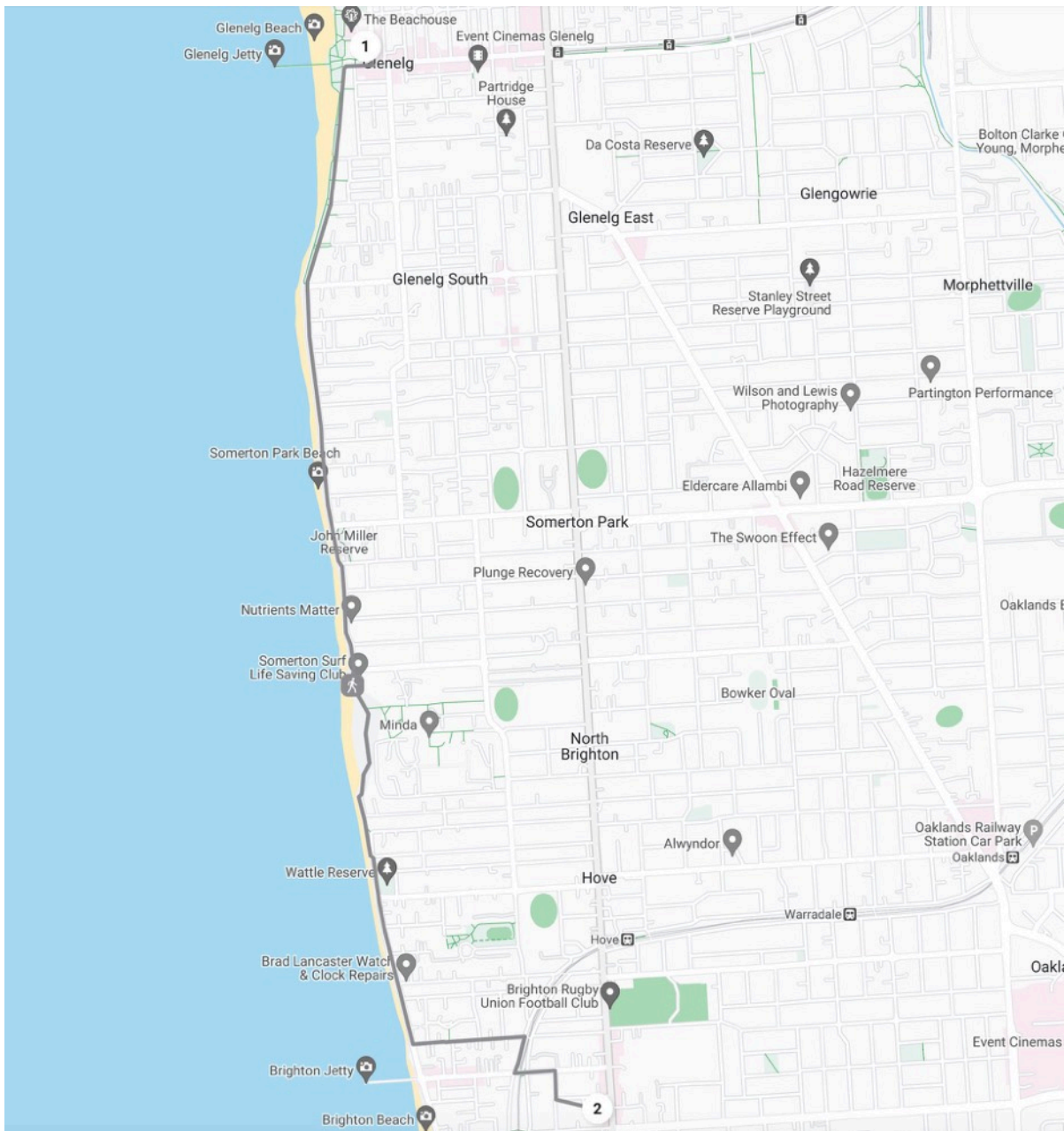


Day 16 Thursday 1st February 2024

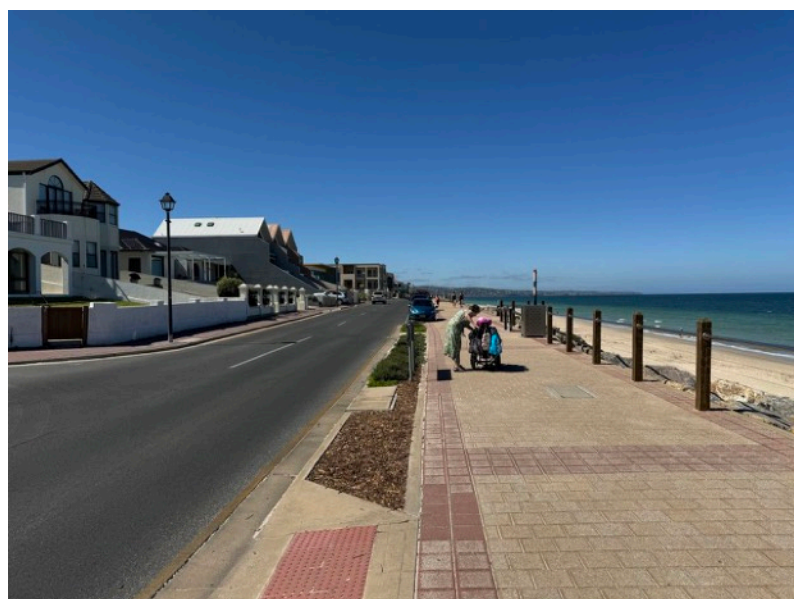
In Glenelg - A breezy walk along the seafront to Brighton

Today's Aussie Slang CHUCK A SICKIE = Call in sick to work for a day off when you're not actually sick

Today we had a walk all the way from Glenelg Jetty to Brighton Jetty and back. This was 6 miles. We stopped for a coffee in Brighton and also at a charity shop ('Op Shop') called Minda that is for fundraising for supporting people with a disability .



(<https://mindainc.com.au>) We had a long chat with a lady running it about the services in Australia. As a coincidence we met quite a few wheelchair users who were with people from 'Noble Care' (<https://noblecaresa.com.au>) along the promenade as it is a good place for a long walk. The promenade goes from Glenelg Marina to beyond Brighton and is flat most of the way, just with slight hills at Brighton Sand dunes. It was windy this week so we were kept cool.

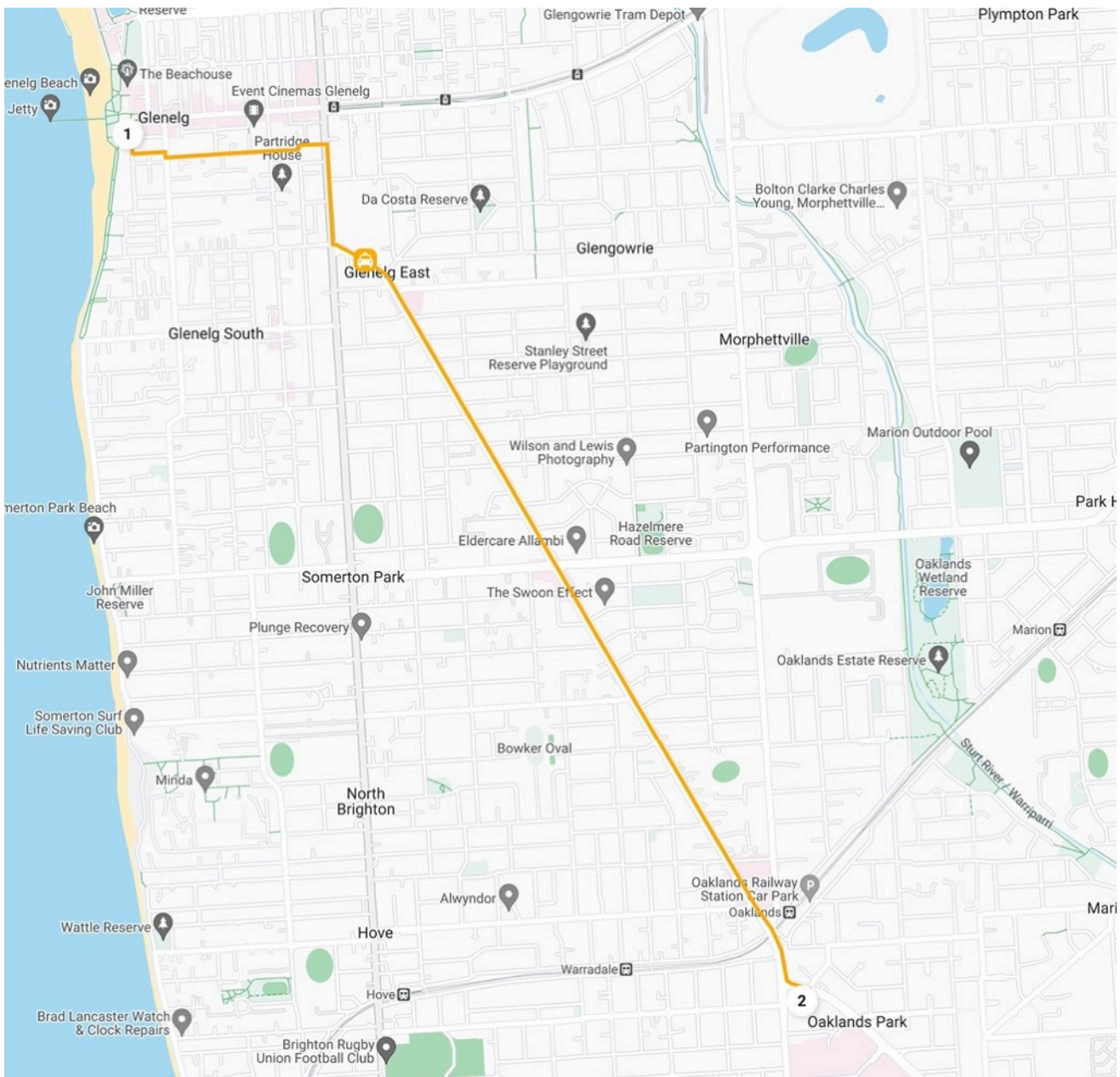


Day 17 Friday 2nd February 2024

In Glenelg - Looking for an accessible public swimming pool.

Today's Aussie Slang: GOING TROPPO - Going crazy (probably originating from symptoms when exposed to too much tropical heat)

The Stamford Grand in Glenelg has a swimming pool but it cannot be accessed in a wheelchair - not even the pool environment. Today we needed to find a pool that we can take Vicki into - one with a suitable changing area with a hoist and shower trolley or similar, plus easy





access into the pool. We drove to one public pool but it was closed for a festival so we found another - the SA Aquatic Centre This was lucky as the second pool we went to has a Paralympic practice pool. We were amazed at the brilliant facilities. Check the article here : <https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../fantastic-accessible...>



Apparently most public swimming baths in Australia have good facilities for those with mobility challenges.

One of the managers showed us around. There were several wheeled trolleys that you can be hoisted on and wheeled down the slope into



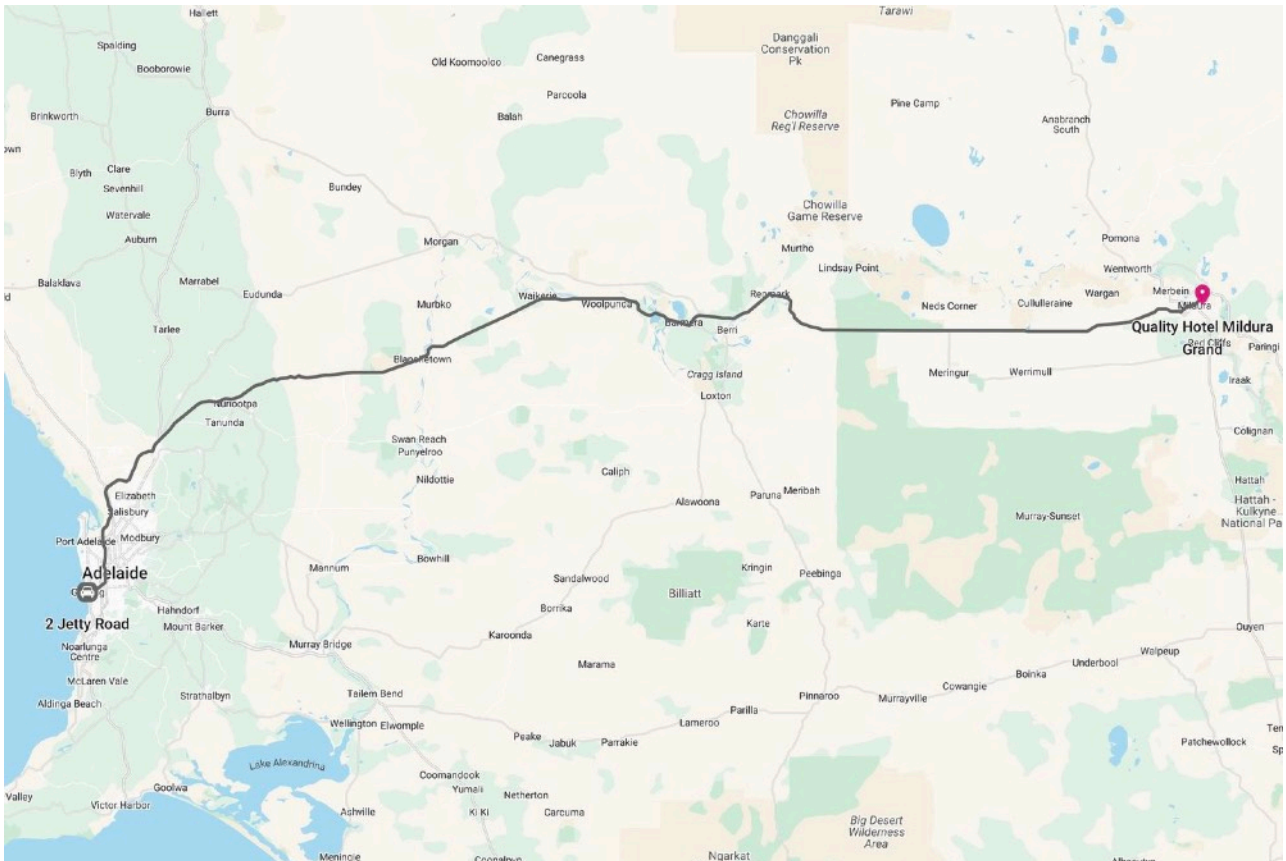
the big pool. The changing room had a drop-down changing bed hoist toilet et cetera and big space by the shower for the wheeled trolley. This was brilliant for Vicki. She had one and a half hours in the pool we met lots of new people and chatted as well as doing exercises. The only delay on the way out was that there is only one changing room for the PMLD use.

Day 18 Saturday, 3rd February 2024

Glenelg (Adelaide) to Mildura 253 miles

Today's Aussie Slang : GOON - Cheap wine of the boxed variety.

Today we set off from Glenelg to Mildura. It took a little while to get out of the city, but the roads were mostly straight with a speed limit of 110



km an hour. All the way from Adelaide to Mildura is wine producing country. We recognised some names like 'Banrock Station' and the wine growing region of the Barossa Valley. We seemed to pass over or by the Murray River, many times.

As we approach the area called Riverland; the signs warn that no one should not have fruit with them. We had just picked up apples from the buffet at breakfast that morning and thought they couldn't possibly expect us to throw those away so we drove



by the quarantine bin. Further along the road, the 'fruit police' stopped us and we confessed to having two apples. The uniformed gent took away our two apples and we waited to see if we had to pay a fine. Fortunately, it was our lucky day and he sent us on our way. We now understand why it is so important to abide by these rules - apparently any unwanted insects can be introduced into areas where they could cause devastation to orchards, crops etc.

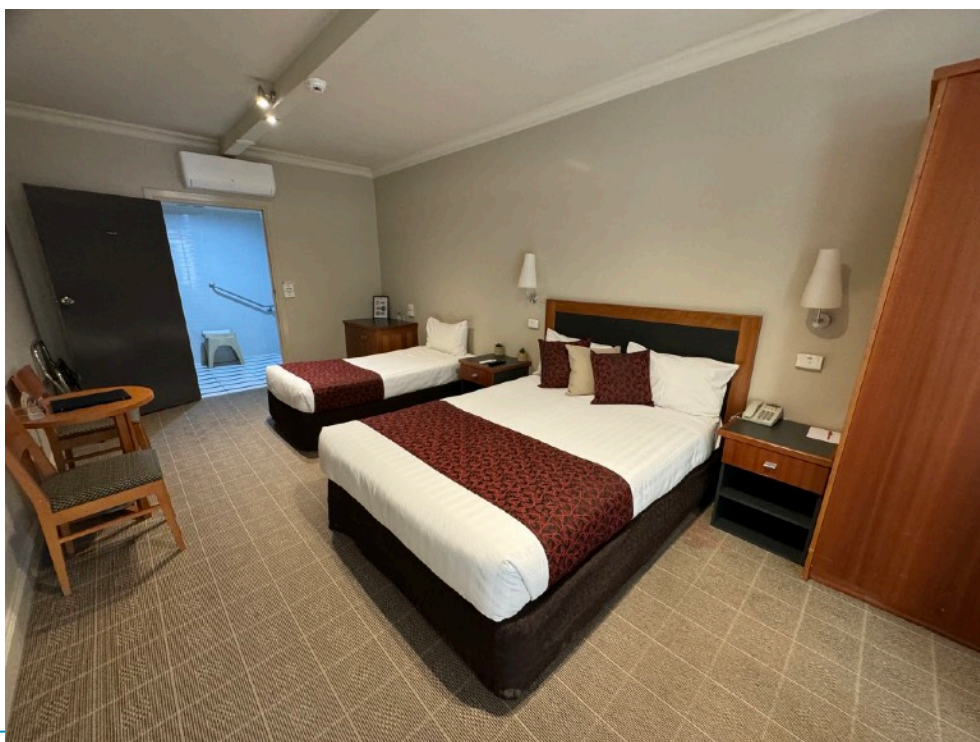
We were due to be in Mildura on Day 19, and had booked an accessible room through booking.com to stay at the Best Western on a (non-refundable) rate. We asked if booking.com would change the date but they refused, so we lost the money on that one. We tried contacting the Best Western directly by email, but apparently our email went into their 'junk' folder.



We arrived in Mildura at 3 o'clock and went straight to the Best Western we were told that if we had booked directly with them and not via booking.com a refund

would have been in order. We learnt a lesson there. We asked if they could swap our booking from the next day, but unfortunately no ground floor rooms were available . The kind receptionist helped us find an accessible room at the 'Grand Hotel' . <https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../quality-hotel-mildura-grand>

Places call themselves 'Grand' or 'Elite' when that use of the word sometimes is questionable. The accessible room was off a small courtyard somewhere in the middle of the hotel and very dull and dingy.





We went out in the 43° heat to find dinner in an air-conditioned restaurant. We stopped to look at the menu at 'Andy's Kitchen', (<https://milduraandyskitchen.com.au>) and we were greeted by a very delightful Asian lady, so we stopped; the service, ambience and food were brilliant.

We took a couple of pictures of the inside of the restaurant - delightful food and a great atmosphere and easy wheelchair access. We walked back to the hotel calling into some cool shops on the way. I'm talking temperature and not style.

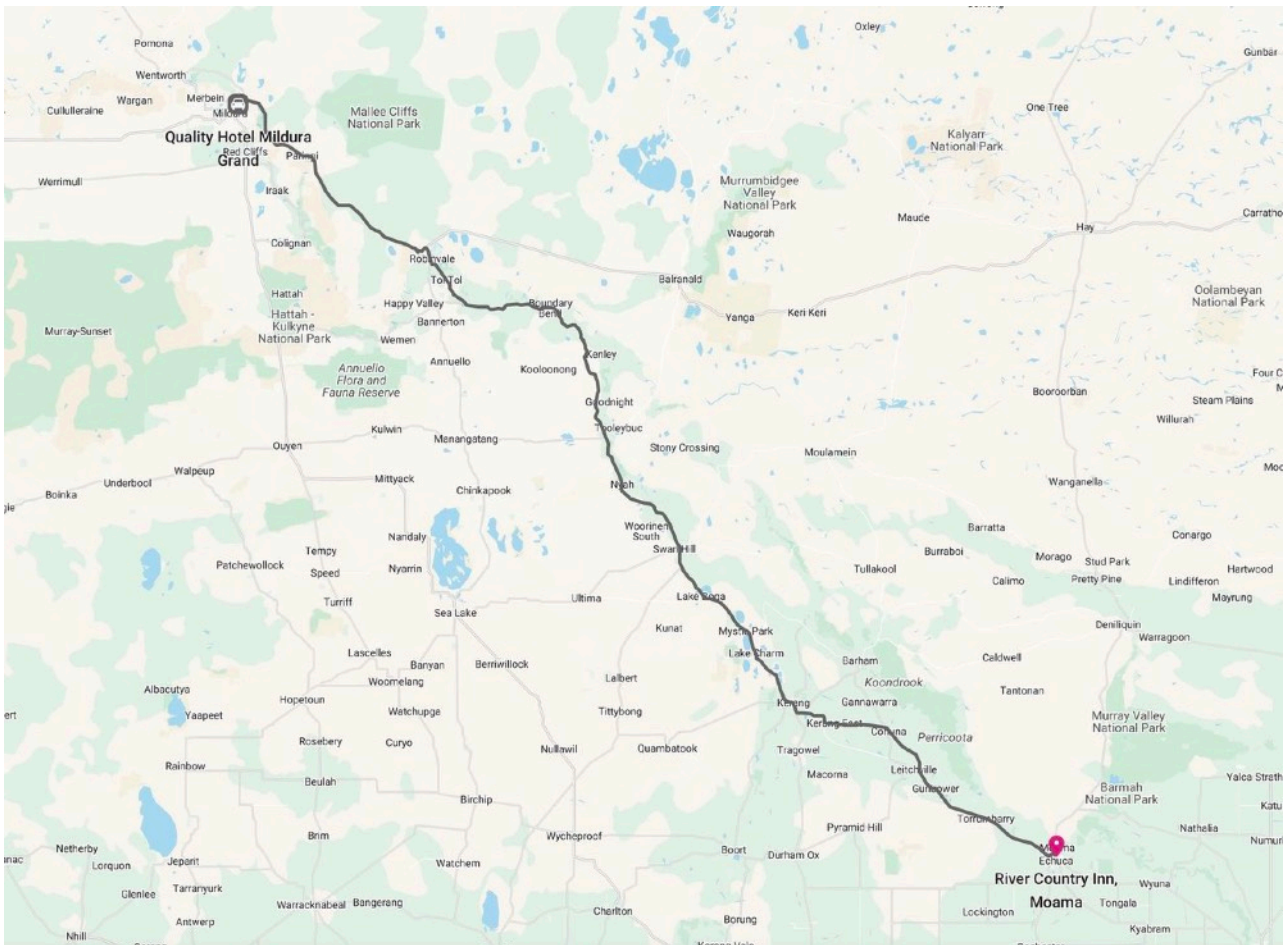
At the Grand Hotel there was a wedding party with lots of children, with a sitting area to take your drink and have a chat with friends. This was just outside of the accessible room. Needless to say it was hardly a tranquil environment.

Day 19 Sunday, 4th February 2024

Mildura to Moama 233 miles

Today's Aussie slang ; MAD AS A CUT SNAKE - Very angry, crazy with rage .

We set off early from the Grand Mildura to drive to Moama near Echuca. This area is well known for vintage paddle steamer trips down the Murray River (<https://www.visitnsw.com/.../coun.../the-murray/echuca-moama> .) , I think there is one wheelchair accessible vessel, but sadly we didn't have enough time to investigate further.



Our vehicle has excellent air-conditioning which is a relief. Driving in Australia is very different. For example, when you come up to roadworks, the speed limit falls to 40km an hour. When you see a speed camera notice just round the corner, there will be at least 10 speed cameras from every angle. On the smallest roads, there are speed limits of 100kph or 110kph.

A yellow sign gives you an advised speed for the angle of an upcoming bend. There was one area today that had a 40 speed limit, but no roadworks, I couldn't see why this was; there was a lump in the road and we took off.

We arrived at the River Country Inn in Moama at 14.00 (<https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../river-country-inn-moama>) - the temperature then was about 40°. There was a supermarket across the road so we went shopping for lunch. Our room at the inn was dated,



but okay once we got the air-conditioning under control. Vicki had a lie on the bed all afternoon and was happy just to lie there after the long drive. My husband and I took it in turns to dip in the pool - unfortunately no pool lift for Vicki.

This was the only accommodation that supplied a huge can of bug spray, and did we need it! I was able to do some washing including Vicki's wheelchair covers, which dried in 20 minutes in the sun. The River Country Inn had the best garden of anywhere we've stayed so far,

but too hot, even in the shade. Even the wasps landed on the pool to cool off.

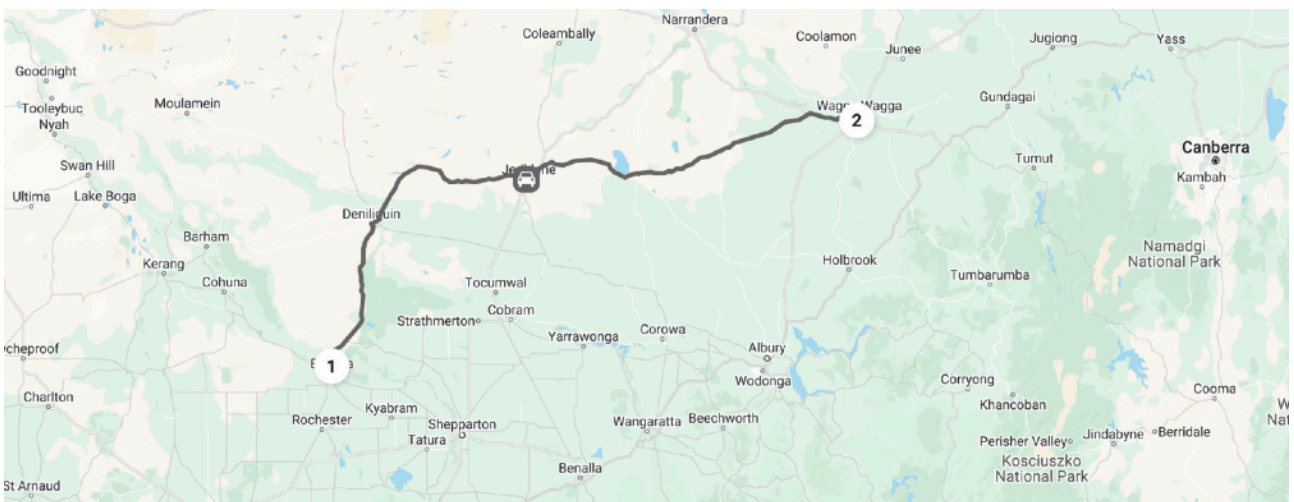


Day 20 Monday, 5th February 2024

Moama/Eschuca to Wagga Wagga 203 miles

Today's Aussie Slang: BLUDGER : Someone who is lazy; relies on others to do things.

Today we travelled from Moama along the A20 Sturt Highway to Wagga Wagga, New South Wales' largest inland city. (<https://www.waggawaggaaustralia.com.au/>) We were corrected several times by locals - apparently, it is pronounced with an 'O'. Thankfully, the temperature was on the way down today.



We needed to stop at the toilet en route in the town of Urana where we found a public 'dunny'. I had to share with a mosquito and a fat spider. I really don't want to go into any more detail about the state of the dunny.

We spotted a marvellous old building - the 'Royal George Hotel' proudly stating '1926' under the name ; the lower level of the building was built in 1875. Offering three types of beer, 'thirst' aid, 'accommodation' and 'counter meals' we discovered that it hasn't served a beer since 1998. Apparently it sold in September 2023 for AU\$375,000 and is now awaiting the next chapter in its history.



For entertainment on the journey today, we learned some useful Australian slang. We also learned that to us it seemed that almost every tree in Australia is a eucalyptus also known as gumtree. Upon arrival in Wagga Wagga we found our overnight accommodation at the Best Western Ambassador Motor Inn & Apartments (<https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../best-western-ambassador...>). As I said in



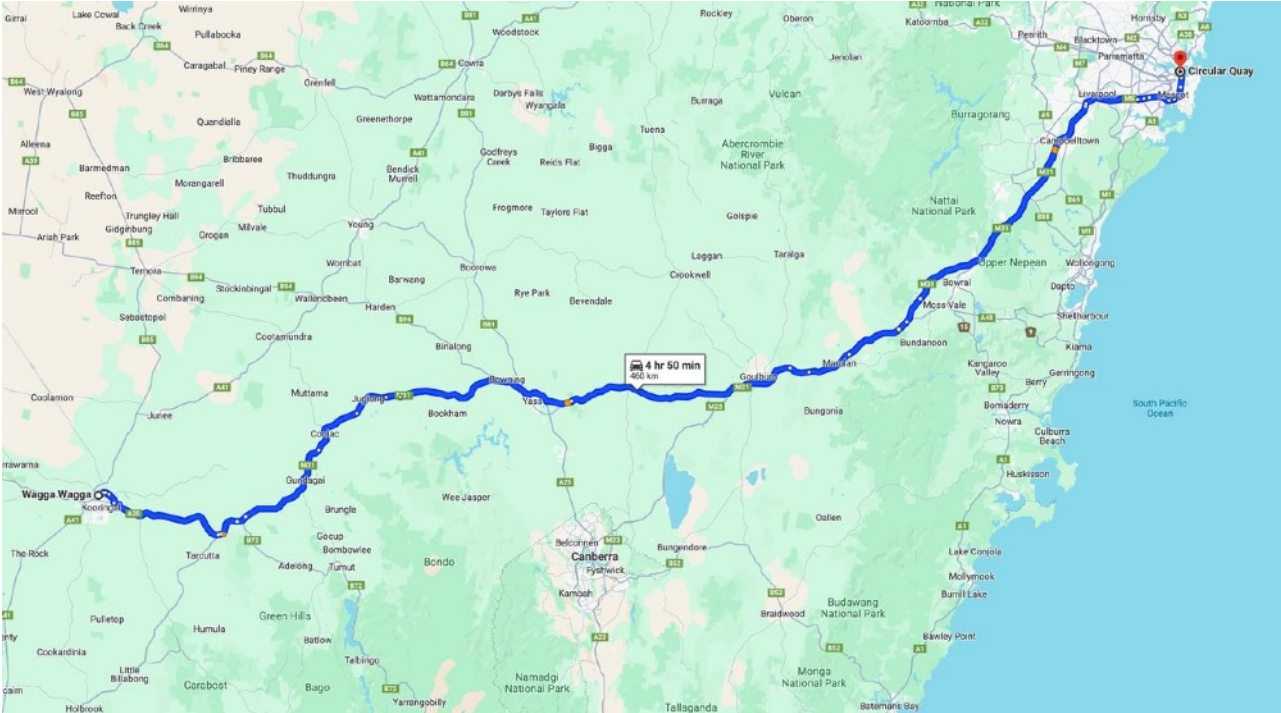
earlier posts, using these motels were ideal for the type of trip we were doing as they were spacious, with a kitchen areas (some facilities more comprehensive than others). All accessible rooms had good size roll-in showers. It rained all evening so we went out for a walk in the rain, we found that almost every shop and food restaurant closes before five on a Monday. Supermarkets were open.

Day 21 Tuesday, 6th February 2024.

Wagga Wagga to Sydney (Circular Quay) 280 miles

Today's Aussie Slang *WHAT'S THE JOHN DORY?* - *What's the story?*

What's going on?



We were able to give the van a clean and remove all the insects from the windscreen, before we left the motel this morning . The journey from Wagga to Sydney is mainly on the M31 Hume Highway .

As you would expect on a motorway, there were some illuminated advisory and message boards . Then as we approached a services junction we saw a sign “Dog on Tuckerbox” Our Aussie slang lesson didn’t give us any clue what this might mean. Was there a dog on the carriageway or was it loose at the

next services? Apparently it is an internationally recognised icon monument with gardens and a café (<https://www.visitgundagai.com.au/dis.../dog-on-the-tuckerbox>)

When we stopped in a service area by Sutton Forest we had a chat with a taxi driver who was unloading some wheelchair passengers from his van. He told us that his company, '13 Cabs' operate accessible transport services in many areas of Australia (<https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../excursions/13cabs-australia>) .

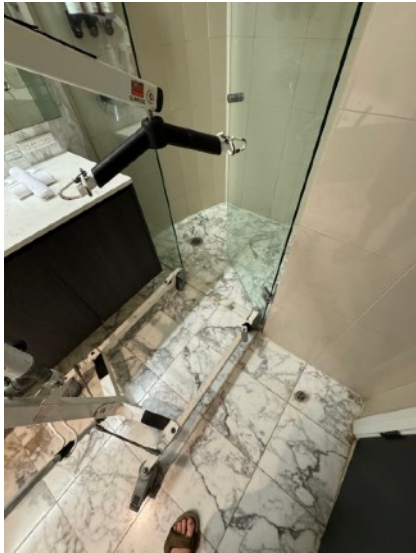


The journey today took five hours, but we thought that motorway driving in Australia was easier than the UK. We arrived at Pullman Grand on Circular Quay at 3:30 in the afternoon. We cleared the van out, ready to hand back to Integrity Car sales and Rentals (<https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../integrity-car-sales-rentals>) .



We had booked an amazing apartment, with a full kitchen, washer and drier, overlooking Circular Quay and Sydney Harbour Bridge.

When we booked the apartment, we sent an email stating that we needed an accessible room. Whoever answered this email stated that the property does not have



accessible rooms but "all the showers are 'wheel-in' so 'it won't be a problem" . As we find so often , without awareness and training, there is a lack of understanding around accessibility. We should have made sure - lesson learnt. Vicki could

only just get through the bathroom door. There was no access for her into the shower or into the bath, though the toilet access was ok (we did manage her showering with a bit of creative thinking as their was a drain in the floor) . What a disappointment, - the Pullman have no accessible bathrooms, save for one in the swimming pool area (which has no pool hoist).



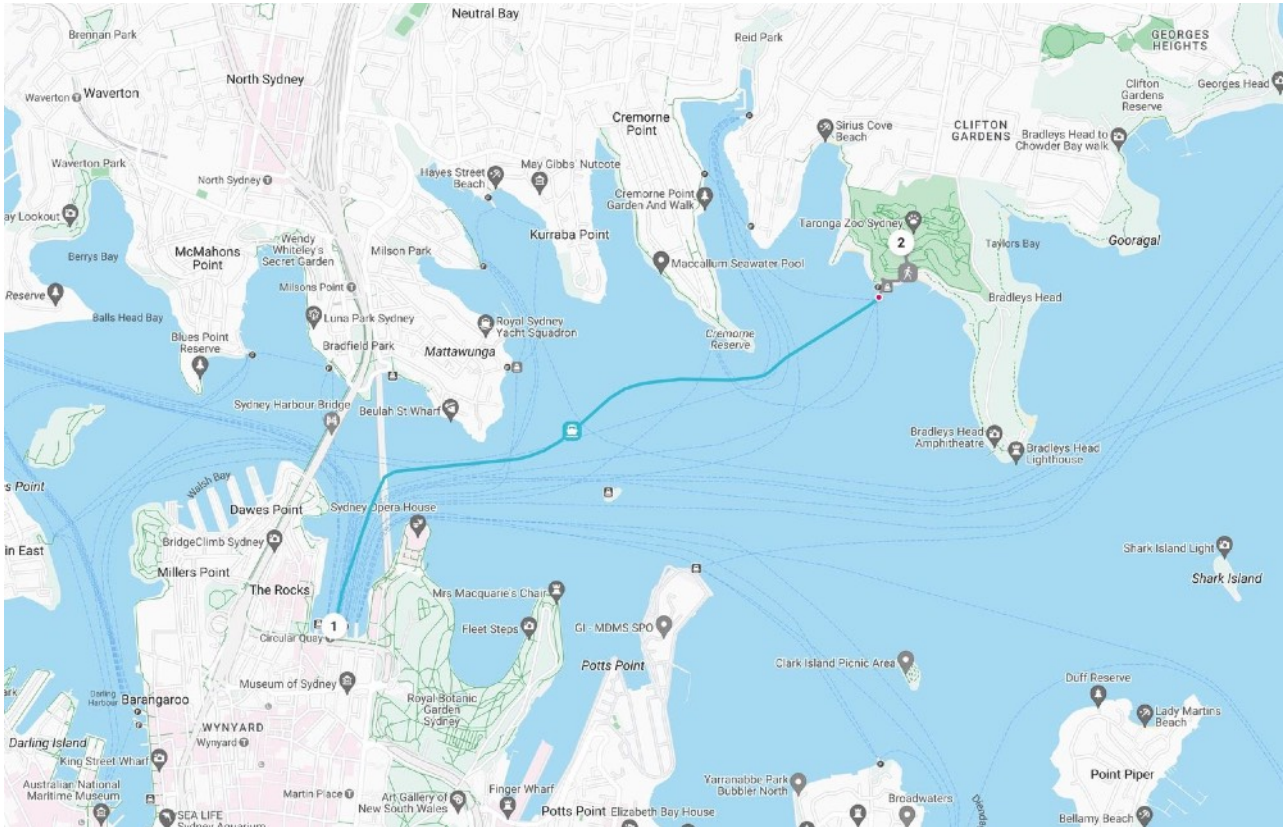
The supervisor at the Pullman did offer breakfast during our stay as a means of compensating us for the service failure on their part. We decided to enjoy the view and cope as well as we could as Vicki absolutely loved the view from the balcony.

The view was amazing - all the ferries going in and out of Circular Quay; all the tourists , the noise the trains cruise ships coming and going - there was always something to watch. We found out that the 80's band 'Simple Minds' had a concert at the Opera House , but it was completely sold out.

Day 22 Wednesday 7th February 2024.

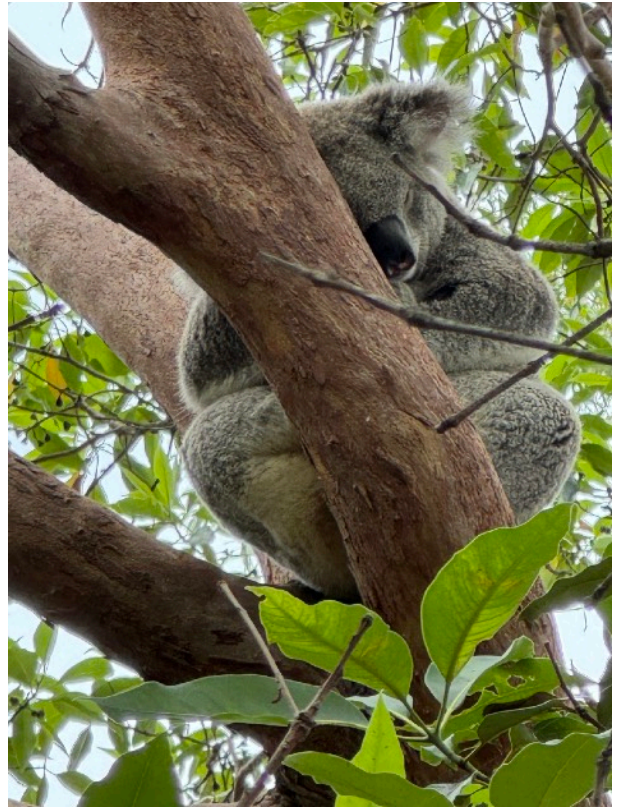
Ferry trip to Taronga Zoo from Circular Quay, Sydney

Today's Aussie Slang: HOON - A hooligan ; someone driving badly.



As we have seen very little native Australian wildlife whilst we have been away, we decided to visit Taronga Zoo. (<https://taronga.org.au/sydney-zoo>) To get there you catch the accessible ferry from Circular Quay just outside our hotel. It takes you across the harbour to the zoo. The zoo is on the side of the hill.

Now they supply a bus to take you to the top of the hill to start the zoo walk. We had to wait ages for the bus (fully accessible), but it is a long way to the top. Once you enter the zoo, you mostly zigzag downwards to see all the animals. We were able to see kangaroos, koalas wombat and most of the Aussie animals that we had missed. Unfortunately, they have no duck billed platypus at the moment.



Day 23 Thursday, 8th February 2024

Trip to Bondi Beach

Today's Aussie Slang: MAN IN A GREY SUIT - Surfing slang for a shark.

The morning started out sunny - another cruise ship arrived early morning.



Today we went to Bondi Beach, we caught the train from Circular Quay to Bondi Junction (great help from the railway staff with the ramp) and walked the rest of the way. It's quite a long walk down station to Bondi Beach through the shops and down a very long hill. There were some good surfing waves at Bondi so not really swimming water for non-surfers, so we had a paddle instead! It was too far to take Vicki to the sea. We sat and enjoyed the ocean and the view. We discovered a small fast food restaurant called Chagrill Charlie's (<https://chagrillcharlies.com/>) and stopped for lunch there. They have

sixteen outlets in the Sydney area and one in Melbourne. There was a great selection of many different dishes including a wide range of different salads and vegetarian dishes. It was one of the best lunches that we've had so far on this trip. In view of the push back up the hill to Bondi Junction Station, we decided to take the bus back to Circular Quay. This evening we took a few photos of the night time skyline.





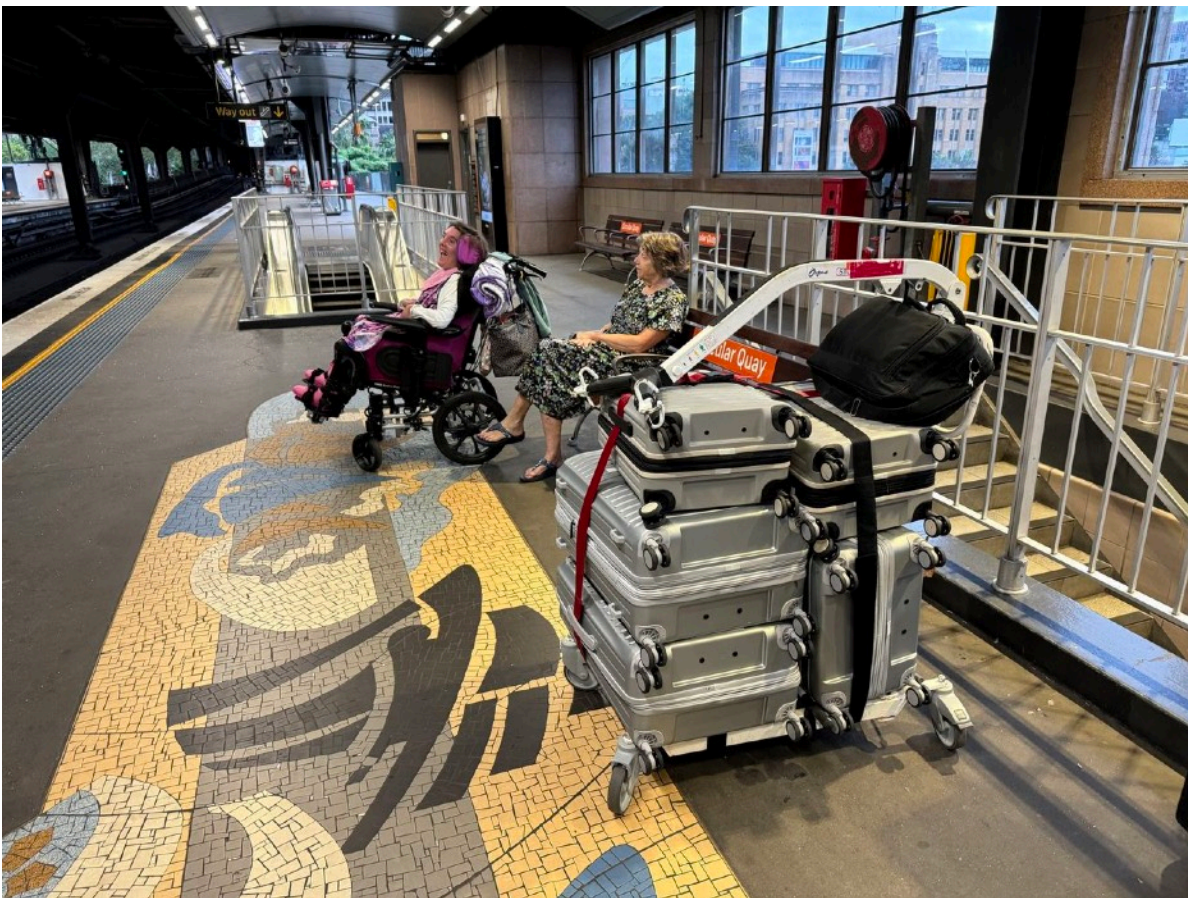
Day 24 Friday, 9th February 2024.

Flying Sydney to Seoul

Last Day of Aussie Slang : A TWO POT SCREAMER : A person who has a low tolerance of alcohol, or who becomes drunk easily or quickly.



We had to be up very early this morning and we caught sight of today's cruise ship arrival. This gave us plenty of time to catch a train from Circular Quay to the International Airport (Kingsford Smith) Sydney. The train is meant to go every five minutes but this morning there was a problem on the



line. the announcements said the train would be 8 minutes 16 minutes

15 minutes 9 minutes and then suddenly it arrived when no one was expecting it. Fortunately, the helpful conductor kept the train waiting and gave us plenty of time with the ram



Check-in at the Asiana Airlines desk was efficient, and we had breakfast in the lounge. At the aircraft door, we were greeted by the ground staff who took Vicki off the aircraft three weeks ago. It was all very easy , Vicki only weighs 45kgs and she travels with her sling underneath her so that the straps can be used to lift her instead of the possibility of discomfort to her and more challenges for the ground handling staff. Asiana staff were delightful.

The Asiana A380 Airbus carries 495 passengers and this flight was quite empty. We didn't realise that 9th to 11th February was the Lunar New Year Public Holiday in Korea. 10 hours is a long flight, especially during the day with a limited entertainment system. Vicki was very comfortable, the whole time lying down in business class. Our seats



were on the upper deck where there is a disabled toilet this may not be suitable for all, but is a step in the right direction. We would never travel this distance with her in economy due to her condition and

her care needs. It is so much easier managing her tube feeding, nebuliser and suction (if needed) with the extra space. It is just so expensive now, but on this occasion half the price with Asiana compared with airlines like Emirates, Singapore Airlines etc.

When booking an Asiana flight from Australia to London, as the onward flight from Seoul does not connect, the airline offer complimentary overnight accommodation and transfers so that passengers can check in on the following day's flight. As we were having to overnight anyway, we decided to stay in Seoul for 5 nights.

The aircraft landed at 18.30, and after a 15 minute, wait for the wheelchair we were out of the airport in about 45 minutes. Then our problems began! We found our way to the airport railway station very easily (along walk) and then we hit a brick wall. In a country that is full of electronic gadgets, and has companies like Samsung, LG, Hyundai and Kia, we were surprised to learn that you cannot use a credit card or debit card to buy a metro train ticket. It's cash only and we didn't have any.

The ATM machines that are nearby are completely in Korean and after some help from a nice Korean lady , all our debit and credit cards were rejected . My husband had to walk back to the airport terminal to try and get cash from a currency exchange desk. Before he reached the desk he found an ATM that did eventually recognise one of his cards, and the cash was dispensed. So - back to the metro train ticket machine which then refused the 50,000won note dispensed by the ATM. We were then shown the cash exchange machine!! The language barrier is a challenge even though most Koreans learn English in school. All signs are in Korean as you would expect but not all are translated.

There are NO ramps to assist into the trains and the gap between trains and platforms is significant; apparently you have to phone and book ahead if you need a ramp! Vicki's wheels got stuck on the first transfer. The hoist was even more of a challenge. We decided to opt for the KTX express train which DID take credit cards (this is worth knowing), and caught the fast train to Seoul Central and then we were escorted out of that station and into the Seoul Central metro station. What a relief, even though the train company employee escort had little English we were shown the way and didn't have to work it out ourselves.

We found the departures for 'Yongsan 'and it was a short walk from that station to the hotel in Seoul Dragon City which is collection of three hotels offering some 1,700 rooms run by the Accor group (Novotel, Grand Mercure and Ibis) (<https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../novotel-ambassador-seoul...>) .

It is right next door to the electronics market. We chose this location as it was easy access to a major accessible train station at Yongsan. We arrived at the hotel about 23.00. No English breakfast tea here, but I had guessed that and brought our own. The right tea is very important to the British! The Novotel suite is really comfortable and very accessible, with a washer drier and a kitchen area with great views over the city from the 27th floor.



South Korea - Return Stopover from Australia

Day 25 Saturday 10th February 2024

Trip up to Namsan Mountain Park

We were exhausted from travelling yesterday, and so we had a bit of a sleep after breakfast. The sun came out after lunch and the sky cleared a little, but the outside temperature was only 7 degrees. We decided to go to the Seoul Tower to look at the view from the top. The Tower is on the Namsan Mountain Park overlooking the city. It takes a long time to negotiate a new metro system, especially when very little is in English and there are very few railway workers to help. We eventually got to the nearest Metro station to Namsan mountain.



I had read that there is an elevator that goes up to the cable car that then goes up the mountain.



We struggled to find this and ended up, walking up, very steep streets to the cable car station. We got in the queue for tickets and then had a huge shock. To get to the top of the mountain. We were grateful that we had the bolt-on motor on Vicki's wheelchair (<https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../wheelchair-power-assistance>) .

The elevator to the cable car is the only way for someone in a wheelchair because there are steps on the walkway up to the boarding area. We queued

for our ticket and headed for the elevator there. We were stopped by two young men working who informed us that you cannot use the elevator 'you have to get in the queue'.



We said that Vicki needs the elevator. Apparently, Vicki and one person can use the elevator, but the other person has to walk up the stairs in the queue and it's about an hour they said. At that point a very elderly lady with a stick came out of the elevator with a younger person. I asked these guys whether the elderly lady had also been made to wait for the other person in their party to mount the stairs, and to my dismay they said

'yes'. This meant that every elderly or disabled person has to be treated exactly the same as the bodied population. I said to the guys this is the only country we have ever been to who treats elderly and disabled people in this way. I told them that I was very sad for your elderly people. Vicki and I got the elevator and sat on the bench at the



top, waiting for my husband, who was in the queue, going up the stairs. My words must've had an effect because he was allowed to come in the elevator and we were allowed in the cable car.



The cable car was great. Frightening when something is so full, but it was about two minutes to the top of the mountain . Evidently there is a tradition of using love padlocks (some heart shaped) to show your love for another ; some of the padlocks had been there a while - going back to the 1990s. There are stalls, food outlets and bars which were very busy as it was



still the public holiday.

We were fascinated by a couple of outdoor games which we had never seen before. One of them apparently is a larger outdoor version of a popular table top game. The vending machine "Funny Box" promised "Enjoy Lucky with Funny" - needless to say we didn't find out what the "Special" or "Random" boxes contained.....



We walked around the summit and chose not to go further up into the tower. The views from the top were fabulous, but there was quite a heavy mist later and it was very cold, with a windchill factor that hit hard.

After the journey down on the cable car we managed to find the elevator to the street , which was more like a funicular railway (a carriage on rails on a 45 degree slope). There was a long queue of mainly able bodied people (there were stairs down to the street) but a kindly gentlemen helped us enter the elevator.

Seoul, South Korea - Return Stopover from Australia

Day 26 Sunday 11th February 2024.

Visit to the National Museum of Korea.

We discovered yesterday that it was Luna New Year and this is most important national holiday for Korea. This would explain why there are so many people and children around the hotel. The swimming pool is open to people from outside the hotel and was packed, so we've given up on that one.



Today we chose to walk to the National Museum of Korea. This is mostly because the trains are very hard work simply trying to find the right connection at times. Apparently This museum is one of the largest in the Asia. We found that the building is huge, but the actual content seems very sparse. We stopped on the way and chatted to a kindly police officer who was guarding the front of the presidential palace . He had the luxury of an electric fire - it was a very cold day! The museum



offered minimal artefacts from the beginnings of human existence in Korea - axe heads, stone tools etc ,and later periods with very little information about where these were discovered and from what period in time etc. I think we were expecting a bit more social history here, but didn't find it.

There was nothing about the most recent political history of the Korean Peninsula. We were not very adventurous with the local food as nearly all menus were only in



Korean. This evening we opted for Indian food (menu partially in English) which had a Korean twist!

Seoul, South Korea - Return Stopover from Australia

Day 27 Monday, 12th February 2024

Visit to the National Aviation Museum of Korea.

Today, the idea was to visit the National Aviation Museum of Korea . We headed for a station called 'Airport Market' which is close to Gimpo Airport. Apparently, Gimpo was previously known as 'Kimpo International' in some countries and was the main international airport



until 2001 when Incheon was opened. The train journey took rather a long time mostly because we had challenges with the metro lines - it took a lot of metro map reading and planning. Sometimes you need to wait for the next train, and this can be on a different platform. It's announced in Korean and so we had to use our best observation skills! Outside the Airport Market station was very interesting - very much local shops and as would be expected, all signs etc were in Korean. Fortunately, it was easy to find a young lady who could help us with directions. We walked through wooded area, but all the vegetation was

brown . There was no green anywhere. There's not even a weed. This makes me wonder whether it's too dry or too cold for some plants in the winter?

The aviation museum proved to be totally different to any aviation museum we had experienced. What an interesting and educational place ; it offers an an immersive experience, particularly for young children. There is an accessible roof top observation deck which overlooks Gimpo Airport - great for plane spotters.

At this aviation museum, the focus is definitely more on education and learning , than the aircraft exhibits. You could check in , go through security, play in the airport lounge and then learn how the baggage is taken to the aircraft . You could learn about air traffic control, and how aircraft movements are managed on the ground. A very nice lady



encouraged us to participate in the construction of a 'balloon helicopter' along with all the children. It was lovely to be able to take part and share in the experience. All in all an excellent day out.



Seoul, South Korea - Return Stopover from Australia

Day 28 - Tuesday 13th February, 2024

A Visit to 'Lotte World'

This morning we got up and had negative thoughts about going out again, as the treatment we have had from the general population has at times been so unhelpful regarding Vicki's disability that at times we feel that we don't want to go anywhere.

We had intended to go to 'Lotte World'

(<https://adventure.lotteworld.com/eng/main/index.do>) so we bought our train tickets and headed in that direction. The journey to Lotte World was quite difficult and took the best part of two hours.



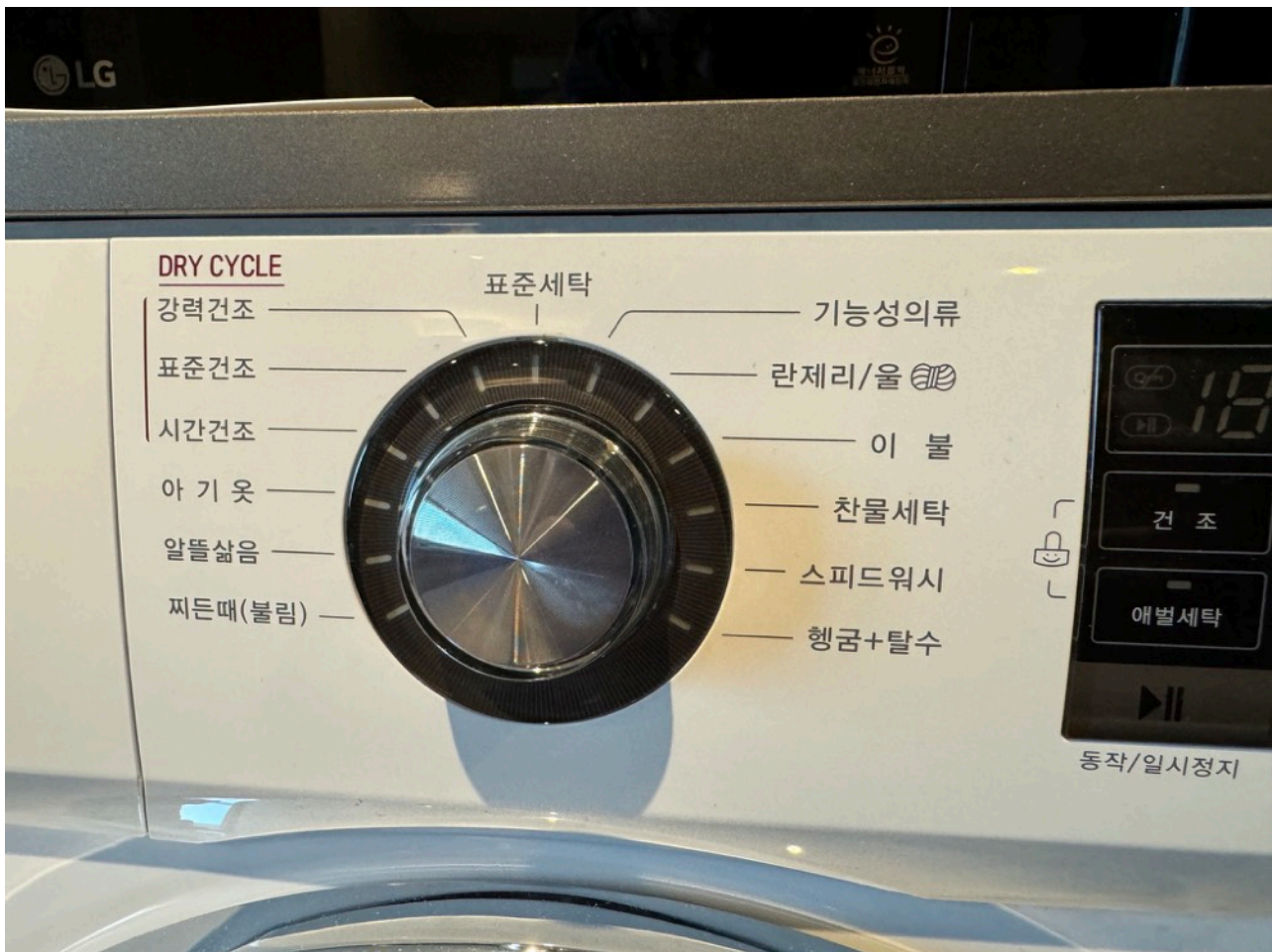
We went into the Lotte World Mall and were able to see the ice rink and the castle, but there were so many people we chose not to go in, so couldn't make a judgement as to what rides and attractions were fully



wheelchair accessible. You can get the general feeling of Lotte World from the shopping mall and the views that you can get from various points. One area looks like a copy of Cinderella's Castle and Disney's Small World. All the characters even have one thumb and three fingers and wear white gloves - standard cartoon attire! We managed to get a healthy chicken caesar salad lunch at a place called 'Earl of Sandwich', it had UK Union Jack Flags all over the place but it wasn't like a caesar salad that we would recognise. We had a short wander round some of the shops just to take in the atmosphere .

In the Lotte World supermarket we looked at food prices especially the fruit. 4 apples for nearly UK £10, 300g blueberries almost UK £14. Trying to get out of Lotte World was a nightmare. It's every man for himself, and particularly the elderly of the population, we encountered some incredibly pushy people with no sense of priority of entrance for wheelchair users into elevators.

One woman shouted at me and Vicki for being in the elevator, and taking up too much space. Another man held Vicki's chair still so that he could get out first, it would have been much easier for him if he had allowed us to exit first. It has become too much for us. It was a relief to arrive back at the hotel. The Novotel room (<https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../novotel-ambassador-seoul...>) is fully equipped and has a washer/drier with all programmes/instructions in



Korean. We managed to figure that out eventually, and not forget a mention of the high tech toilet with lots of functions .





My husband popped out later by himself to the electronics market for a look around, and discovered that there were some very cheap pre-used smart phones for sale in many shops.



Departure from Seoul, South Korea to London - (Return Stopover from Australia)

Day 29 - Wednesday, 14 February 2024.

We have had five nights here - on reflection, three would have been enough in the cold weather. We researched many ways to get to Incheon airport, but came to the conclusion that the train is the only option with the wheelchair, and Yongsan station is right next to the hotel. The buses are rarely adapted, the airport coaches (known as 'limousines') are impossible for a wheelchair user as they have no lift. I believe that there are a limited number of wheelchair accessible vans in the city, which can probably arrange airport transfers, but we decided on the train route. (<https://www.enablemytrip.com/.../seoul-danurim-south-korea>)



We were up at 6:30 and left the hotel at 7:30 eventually arriving at the airport at 9:40. Each time we change trains we have to negotiate the gap between the train and the platform. At one point the gap was

about 20 cm which is bigger than Vicki's front wheels and bigger than the hoist wheels. Vicki has big back wheels so that wasn't such a problem, but by husband had to lift the hoist to get it off the train which created a bit of a delay for the busy commuter trains.

There have been some kind helpful people on this trip to Seoul, but it has been noticeable that there is a lack of support for wheelchair users from the train companies. Apparently if you need a ramp to board the train you have to arrange this in advance by telephone - this is not easy for visitors who have little knowledge of the Korean language. There was one elderly man this morning with two huge trolleys who escorted us from one station to the airport. He told us that he had lived in London for a few years - what an absolute gentleman.

Check in was fairly straightforward, but we were stopped for a while at security, not for the lithium battery or the oxygen concentrator, but for the bullet shaped pins of the hoist which secures the hydraulic ram. It took some explaining to the security personnel - I think in future we should take photos of these and where they fit onto the hoist to avoid these types of delays. Like most tourists we spent the last of our Korean Won in duty-free. We had breakfast in the lounge, consisting of sweet potato sandwiches and pot noodle. This appears to be Seoul food!

The 15 hour flight from Seoul to London with nine hour time difference was tedious but Asiana Airlines were excellent again.

