

FEBRUARY 10 -SEA DAY

We are hurting today from all the walking we did yesterday.

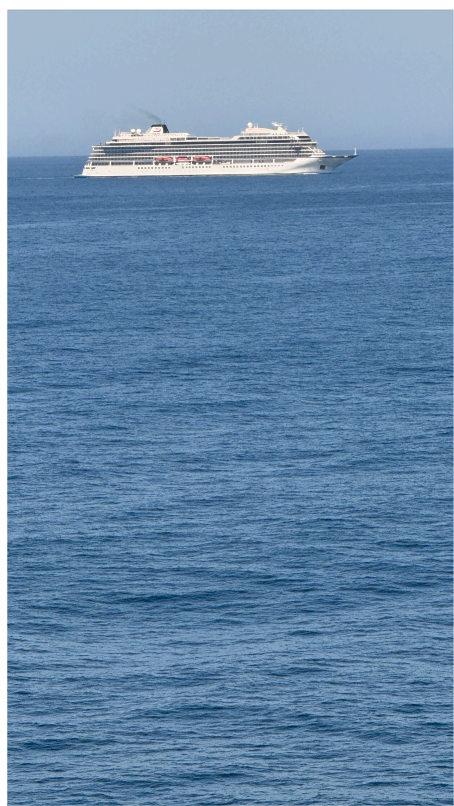
The ship was celebrating the Chinese Lunar New Year so had Chinese food for dinner. It was quite a feast. They went out of their way to decorate with Chinese Lanterns and green dragons artistically carved on watermelons.

RUMBLINGS

We hear rumblings throughout the ship questioning why we did not go to Melbourne instead of Sydney and if we had gone to Melbourne, then perhaps we would've then been able to go to Hobart. Tasmania. And why didn't we cruise Milford and Doubtful Sound? Instead some believe we are wasting time going to Sydney for one day and then turning around and coming all the back.

FEBRUARY 11 - PHILLIPS ISLAND

Went to "Bruce's" (the social coordinator) talk that he has every morning but instead of a discussion about the ship and changes in itinerary etc., the things that were on people's minds, well at least, on our mind, it was all about the wine steward on the ship. At the end we tried to ask some questions about the itinerary and changes but he was very snippy. We didn't go there because "It was not on the itinerary!"



VIKING NEPTUNE OUR SISTER SHIP

Viking Neptune was now in sight off our port side most of the day. They are going in to Melbourne for an overnight and must be checking in at customs there.

We were going to Phillips Island to see the penguins. The more we heard about the trip the more we had hesitations. The ship again again was crawling along at a snail's pace. There's no hurry as we can only arrive there at a certain time. Chalk it up to one more day of many at sea.

We finally made contact with Mikey, Larry's nephew, who lives with his wife in Melbourne, Australia. We are supposed to meet up for a visit and transfer a family watch sent to Larry by his niece Jacqueline who wanted Larry to give it to Mikey. We checked into getting the train to Melbourne to save them the trouble of driving the hour, in work traffic, from Melbourne to pick us up to where we would be anchored in Geelong. The train website said they have "a work related slow down in the morning and don't recommend getting the train in to Melbourne". We investigated to see if we could hitch a ride with one of Viking's bus tours to Melbourne and get off at their first stop which would be the Botanical Gardens and meet Mickey there.

We were having trouble getting through by phone and/or email with our nephew so the manager at Viking Customer Service offered us his phone to use. We finally got through to Mikey and said we could probably get to the Botanical Gardens where he and Bibiana could pick us up but "no" he insisted on driving to Geelong to pick us up where the boat is anchored so we set a meeting time of 9:00.

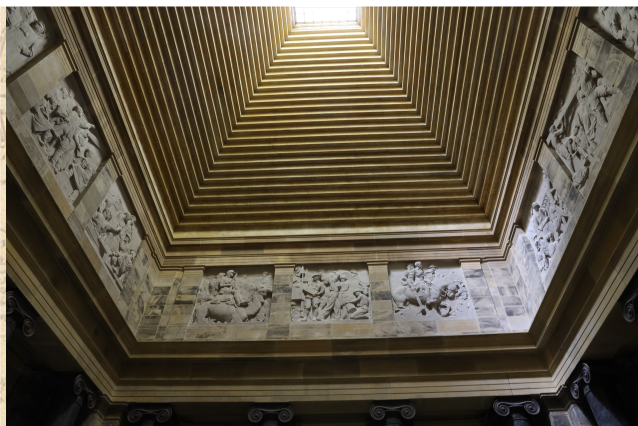


Got our time assignments to go to shore at Phillip Island to see the penguins do their daily return from sea. We aren't scheduled to go on the orange pill boat until 7:00. Then found out the penguins don't come until 8:45 and no photography is allowed. It was going to be a late night and mostly busing, tendering, and waiting in the dark. Decided not to go.

We ate in the dining room that night and were practically the only people there. Probably will be sorry we didn't go see the penguins but it was a decision we both unanimously agreed on.

Instead got a much needed good night's sleep. Internet still crappy and the TV is worthless. I know they are promising they will live stream the Super-bowl so that's probably wiped out the other channels.

FEBRUARY 12 - GEELONG, VICTORIA



Going to meet Micky today. They are on their way to the dock here in Geelong and made a call to confirm. Apparently they just got a text message which was old that said we could take the bus to the botanical gardens to meet them. Can't rely on this internet on the ship.

Mikey and Bibiana were at the dock to meet us. It's been 27 years since we saw them last when they lived in Singapore. Lots to catch up on.

We got in their car and immediately got on the main road to Melbourne. Felt bad they were turning right around and going back, another hour's drive, but that's





what they wanted to do. Lots of chatter going on catching up. Melbourne is the capital city of Australia and looks so fascinating.

We stopped at the Botanical Gardens which is known to have one of the finest collections of botanic species in the world. We stopped to see the Shrine of Remembrance which honors Australian soldiers who gave their lives in war. It was truly an amazing shrine.

It was sad how quickly time was running out. It was 1:00 and we were all getting hungry. Mikey wanted us to see another area which were some unique alleyways

with eateries. We parked and found a restaurant where Mikey ordered Kangaroo steak. Larry and I both took a small bite and it was delicious, very tender and not gamey.

Unbelievably it was time to head back already. The traffic is like many major cities busy on the road out of Melbourne so good thing we left in time as we got back just in time to do the watch transfer and get on the ship. Visit was too short but we are very grateful to them for driving all that way to see us and take us to see Melbourne. Sad to say goodbye as we hope it won't be another 27 years before we see them again.

That night at dinner we saw



Janice. They had wanted to go to Melbourne also but wanted to go on their own, not the tour bus. They had intentions of taking the train but didn't try since the the warning about work slowdowns. Turns out their friends got on the train and got into Melbourne, no problem. Go figure. Janice and John, instead, had to buy two tour excursion tickets from Viking for over \$200 to be dropped off at the Botanic Gardens and then walked 8 miles to explore Melbourne. I think they caught the tour bus back. Crazy day.

Melbourne is difficult if you have a car. It's hard to find a parking spot. Better off if you can to take the public transportation.

FEBRUARY 13 - SEA DAY- HEADING TO EDEN

Another non-eventful day at sea.

The captain made what he said was his "last announcement" at noon today. It would be his last since he will be getting off the ship in Sydney and a new captain will be coming aboard.

STRANGE RED STRIPES

We passed a strange phenomenon today out at sea. They were large red stripes in the water. We saw it the other day when we headed south from Sydney and now see something similar as we head north again. It's probably algae or red tide but we will never know.

I noticed what looked like a weather front coming our way. We decided to have dinner in the buffet restaurant tonight out on the back deck. It was supposed to be taco night. I love tacos, my favorite food. We found a free table out on the back deck under the awning with a good viewing spot to watch the oncoming storm. We dine outside whenever we can weather permitting.

ONLY GLUTEN FREE PEOPLE GET TACOS

We didn't see the taco bar coming in so figured we misunderstood. Larry went to get his food first and then my turn. I found the taco bar way at the back. The head Chef was behind the counter making these delicious looking tacos. His other chefs were making burritos. I got a half of a burrito and moved forward to get a taco. The chef looking confused that I was waiting. I

said I'd like a taco. He said "no we don't have tacos just burritos." I said, "no tacos? Well what is that that you are making?" He said they were for a gluten free person. So, no tacos, just burritos. I was so disappointed and mainly because the tacos looked so good and his burritos really aren't good. Gluten free Nazi getting special treatment again.

SINGING CRICKET SHIP



The storm came in like a fury last night. It showed off with a grand display of lighting and thunder. We were one of the only two couples left outside to watch. The other couple is the well dressed couple from Belgium. It was a funny evening, as we dined because we not only listened to the storm and its thunder but the sound of crickets singing. They arrived on the boat yesterday. They have taken up roost throughout the ship even though the crew sprayed to get rid of them which seems to not have deterred them one bit as they are happily singing throughout the ship.

The wind picked up it's pace as it brought with it the big ominous lightning and thunder filled clouds. Also, along with it came some white butterflies that were too powerless to fight the strong wind which blew them out to sea and to our ship. Larry says he also saw a small bird blown in who took shelter under one of the many nooks and crannies this ship provides.

We ordered a Courvoisier and enjoyed the show staying out as long as we could until it got dark and the rain too much. I wonder what the weather will be like tomorrow when we dock at Eden. It's a small exposed dock and if weather is like this we won't make it.

We stopped by the reception desk to check on the shuttle schedule to town tomorrow in Eden and also to see what dock we will be docking at in Sydney. They said it will be the same dock in Sydney, dammit. So instead of docking in the Quay near "The Rocks" and "The Sydney Opera House" we will have to mess with the shuttle again.

FEBRUARY 14 - EDEN, NEW SOUTH WALES

We are awake about 6. It's dark skies out and big swells and white caps. The wind is blowing a good clip. I suddenly hear a roar of an engine and glance out the window and see a pilot boat dipping and diving into the swells creating sea spray over his bow. He is trying to make an attempt in these seas to drop off the harbor pilot. He keeps coming close to the ship but it's not safe so finally backs off and swings back away from the ship about a 100 yards out and waits for another time safe to approach. We are scrambling to get the cameras to take some





pictures. I really am surprised that we are going to try to dock in this weather. The seas are too much.

The pilot boat comes back to try again. This time he is able to get alongside and climb aboard. Meanwhile two large tugs are coming in the distance. Even the tugs are going up and down in the large swells. They have draped white canvas shields across their bows to prevent them from marking our white hulled ship if they need to push us. It's quite a sight as the swells are very large and the wind is blowing. It's very exciting.

Then there is a pause in the activity like they are reassessing the situation and we all know what is coming next. The Captain has moved the ship out to shore and sits contemplating what to do. His next move I know is going to be an announcement over the intercom to tell us we can't get in to the dock in Eden. It is just not going to happen but he gave it a good try.

I could now see the pilot boat heading back towards us. That can only mean they are coming to pick up the harbor pilot. Next thing, the captain, who said his yesterday's announcement would be his last, was now giving us another. And as we expected the announcement is that we will be unable to go to shore today because of sea conditions.

I just wonder, he must have had an inkling of that last night and could have mentioned that there is a possibility we won't be able to get into the dock. Instead, we are up early, all

dressed, room service breakfast brought in early and then we don't go. It was pretty obvious that the odds didn't look good last night.

So here we are, another cancelled port and another day at sea. So, in a nutshell we cruised all the way up to Sydney for one day, then cruised all the way south again over the same path to Phillip Island to go ashore for an evening to see penguins in the dark, then to nearby Geelong for the day, and now back to Sydney along the very same path (that 3 times now). It seems like we have been cruising for days over the same path and seeing nothing new.

As of today writing this we will be at sea 23 days since January 6th.

Next stop, Sydney again for two days then to the north part of Australia and beyond.

