# NOTES FROM THE ROAD

New Zealand & Australia

***Hello from Auckland.***

***Hi, We hope everyone is doing well.***

***I have set up the first photos on Snapfish and you should get e-mails from Snapfish. If you don't get them let me know by e-mail.***

***We left Houston on 02/12/13 for LA and spent the night, flying out of LAX 02/13/13. We arrived in Auckland on 02/14/13.***

***It is 2/15/13 and 10:23PM and my laptop shows 3:21AM so my laptop thinks it is home.***

***Auckland is beautiful and very friendly welcoming people. We took the yellow bus a full loop and then went down to the wharf for the rest of the afternoon. This is a very relaxed way of life. Tomorrow we plan to go to the museum and then maybe an excursion or something.***

***We will be in Auckland until Monday AM when our rental car will be brought to the hotel and we will head to Lake Taupo.***

***Yesterday morning after we arrived we came to the hotel and waited until about noon for our room and stayed until this AM. I admit it, I am a wimp. Jim was able to get some sleep on the flight however I think I am convinced that I cannot sleep on a plane. Fortunately, at 13 hours it is the longest flight I ever plan to take (probably fooling myself here). Air New Zealand does have very clean planes and good service.***

***Love to all, it's time for bed.***

***Tuesday February 19 @ 7:15PM***

***We began our north island tour in Auckland. Auckland has about 1.3 million people, the north island has about 3.3 million people.***

***From Auckland we went south to Taupo which is pretty much in the center. From Taupo we went to Napier on the east coast and then completely across and south to the west coast where we are currently in Palmerston North.***

***Today was pretty much a travel day, so no new pictures since last night.***

***Traveling in New Zealand by car is completely different then the car travel most of us are accustomed to in 2013. That is not a bad thing, it is just different.***

***75% of New Zealand is covered in mountains ranging from hills, 2,000 ft to way up there at 10,000 ft. The voyage is slow and winding back and forth, it reminds me of Colorado back in the 1950's. Lots and lots of forests and mountains. The areas that are not at the extreme height are primarily farms/ranches with crops of corn/apples/grapes etc. There are many cattle and many, many sheep. There are literally hundreds of wineries, mile after mile.***

***The NZ road system is much different then what we know today. Highways are two lane roads, some the lanes are 10' but most appear 8', very few have shoulders. Many lovely and quaint little towns and villages. Driving through it very much makes us think of the United States in the 50's. Not a bad way to live.***

***Tomorrow we will drive to Wellington on the south tip of this northern NZ and us and our rental car will board a ferry for a 2 1/2 hour trip to the south island. We will spend tomorrow night in Picton on the south island and will resume our New Zealand travel until March 1.***

***More later.***

***February 21, 2013***

***Kaikoura New Zealand South Island***

***Hi everyone, the last I wrote it was Feb. 19 and we were going to Wellington the next morning, the 20th, so us and our rental car could take the ferry to Picton on the south island. So….there was a problem with our ferry reservation and instead of leaving on the 2:25PM ferry we didn’t get on the ferry until 8:00PM. We finally got to Picton on the south island about 11:30PM. We got to our hotel about midnight.***

***This morning we stopped for lunch and then left Picton and drove through more mountainous areas. On the map it looks like you would be right on the edge of the Pacific Ocean but I guess the roads are just far enough in that the mountains hide the sea.***

***We arrived in Kaikoura about 3:30PM and checked in at our motel, unloaded and then took a drive to see a bit of the area.***

***Kailoura is a really quaint little town and it is right at ocean side. We took some pictures and we went back to the CBD so we could walk around and find a place for dinner. We ended up at The Adelphi which is kind of an indoor/outdoor bar with food. Signs posted “Do not leave your food unattended. Any food eaten by the sea gulls will not be replaced”. Jim had steak and chips and I had a really yummy veggie and fruit pizza.***

***Yesterday was a long day so we will make it an early night tonight. Also I do not have internet service so will have to wait until tomorrow and hopefully our motel in Christchurch will have wifi. New pictures will be added to Snapfish at the next place with internet.***

***Love to all, more later.***

***February 22, 2013 Christchurch NZ***

***Today we traveled from Kaikoura to Christchurch.***

***Christchurch is still very much in the recovery process from the devastating 6.3 earthquake which was two years ago today. There are still 7,500 homes that need to be removed and rebuilt. They are still working on lots of streets and business areas in addition to homes. There are architects, engineers and many other workers who have been brought in from all over the globe to help with the rebuilding of the city. As we have seen in the US after natural disasters, the process can be very slow. Literally all of the old historical buildings were destroyed.***

***We checked in mid-afternoon, went next door for lunch and decided to use this as a laundry, bills etc. day. There was a memorial being held today also, so lots of people and lots of rubble. They are still having aftershocks and apparently that can go on for several years after a really bad quake. We chose to not go see the rubble. We do have all clean clothes again though.***

***I have put new pictures on Snapfish from the last couple days.***

***More later.***

***Tomorrow we cross the island for Franz Josef Glacier where we will be for two nights. Then we move further south for Te Anau which is at the beginning of the Fjordland National Park. We will be there three nights.***

***Love to all, more later.***

***Saturday February 23, 2013 Franz Josef, NZ***

***Hello from the Southern Alps,***

***This morning we left Christchurch and drove west for about 3 ½ hours, then started making our way across the mountains and eventually headed south down the west coast of the south island to reach Franz Josef. Total trip time about seven hours. There aren’t a whole lot of roads in NZ so you just meander around until you get to your destination.***

***I was able to get a couple of pictures today of a parrot that is native to NZ. They are not real colorful until they open their wings, then they are really pretty.***

***New Zealand has many, many one lane bridges……as in you make really sure that no one coming from the other direction is on the bridge before you venture onto it. We went over about a dozen of these today.***

***The terrain and vegetation changed dramatically during our west then south voyage today. We were in areas that looked like high desert, then very lush forests of the very dense pines, and back to high desert until we came to another forest that almost looks tropical. I can’t get on the internet this evening so I will send this tomorrow and put some new pictures on Snapfish. Also when I get on the internet I will try to remember to look up the vegetation for the Southern Alps.***

***We will be here for two days so tomorrow we will drive to the lookout for the Glacier. There are several outfits that offer helicopter rides and can take you down to the glaciers. It’s kind of like a gentleman we talked to this evening was saying, we can pay them to take us down or we can drive where we will be above. You are either looking up at it or down, but it’s the same glacier.***

***On a completely different subject, we have yet to see an unleashed dog since we have been in New Zealand. We have seen dogs but none running loose. Very good.***

***Hope all are doing well, more later when I can get online.***

***Sunday, February 24, 2013***

***Good evening from South New Zealand.***

***After giving up on the internet at our current motel, I figured out how to use my iPhone as my hotspot. I may never figure it out again but for tonight I’m good.***

***I have put yesterday and today’s photos on Snapfish.***

***Today we drove out to some different areas from Franz Josef towards Franz Josef glacier and Fox glacier. What we found out was the incline of the walk would be too great for the ability of my 100% pacemaker heart. Neither Jim nor I had the desire to take a helicopter ride. That’s OK though, we will see glaciers in Alaska next year.***

***The dense beauty of the lush sub-tropical rain forest Katote fern trees are amazing.***

***New Zealand is 6th for the highest amount of sheep in the world. China, Australia and India are 1, 2 & 3. When you think about land mass it is pretty mind boggling that New Zealand would be #6. Consider that alongside 75% of New Zealand is mountain ranges. And speaking of sheep and mountains, I think we have seen at least half of them.***

***Tomorrow will be a long and winding road to Te Anau and Fjordland National Park.***

***Best wishes to all, more later***

***Tuesday February 26 12:30 AM***

***Today we made the drive from Franz Josef to Te Anua. It was about 7 hours due to wrapping around and around the mountains and many, many one way bridges. Tomorrow (actually today) we are going on a self guided tour and on Wednesday morning we will go on an organized tour.***

***Time for bed, hope everyone is doing well.***

***There are a few new pictures on Snapfish that I added tonight.***

***Good evening,***

***We are spending our last night in Te Anau tonight and have had a couple of busy days since I last wrote.***

***Yesterday we went on a self guided tour of Milford Sound, which took about six hours. The drive getting to Milford Sound is the big part of it. Traveling on the road in a valley with a mountain range on each side, that closes in more and more the closer you get to Milford Sound. Hairpin turns after hairpin turns, many one way bridges, and lots of tour buses. Since we were going to cruise Doubtful Sound today we did not cruise Milford Sound, based upon the recommendation of the motel owner here in Te Anau.***

***(I just thought I no longer got car sick)***

***We got back to Te Anau about 5PM and stopped at an Italian restaurant just down from the motel. It was excellent.***

***These "towns" are tiny. Franz Josef about one block. Te Anau is maybe two blocks. Franz Josef is basically backpacker. Te Anau is more of a tourist town, more motels and restaurants. There are still backpacker facilities also.***

***Today we went on a tour/cruise that began at 7AM when we were picked up at our motel by a bus that picked up at 3 or 4 other motels. It took us to the first transfer point where we got on a boat which took about an hour at 25Knots to cross a lake to the next transfer point. Then a larger bus took us across Wilmot Pass to the cruise boat for Doubtful Sound. This boat cruised down Doubtful Sound at about 25Knots all the way to the Tasmanian Sea.***

***Along the way there were a few dolphins. At the end of the sound/beginning of Tasman Sea we saw a seal colony with many pups playing in the water while others were sunning themselves on the rocks. The scenery throughout the cruise was absolutely spectacular from beginning to end. It was very reminiscent of pictures you would see of Norwegian Fjords.***

***On the return trip across the mountains to Lake Manapouri we were given a tour of the Manapouri power station which is a hydroelectric power station 600 feet below ground. The power station was constructed in the 60's by drilling and blasting all the required spaces out of solid granite, The power house reminded Jim of the power house at Hoover Damn. After another hours ride across Lake Manapouri we were returned to our motel. It was an incredible day.***

***There are quite a few new photos on Snapfish.***

***Tomorrow we drive to Queenstown where we will spend the night prior to our flight to Sydney.***

***Love to all***

***Hi everyone, Good evening from Queenstown***

***We got into Queenstown about 2PM and checked into our hotel for the night and wow, were we surprised. Due to the surprise, I took a few pictures of our home for the night.***

***The young man who showed us to our room and handled all of our luggage is from Oregon. He came down with a work permit for Australia, and is now in New Zealand, and when his time is up here he said he will probably go to Asia. He said there are so many places in the world he wants to see.***

***This is the most gorgeous suite, I would like to live here!***

***I have posted today's photos to Snapfish already.***

***We checked out from last night's motel in Te Anau about 10AM and went by the bakery to pick up breakfast/lunch. Then we hit the road back to Queenstown. We stopped a few times for pictures.***

***We decided we will splurge this evening and have dinner here at the hotel. We also need to get our baggage ready to fly tomorrow.***

***About New Zealand...........Absolutely beautiful place, and most all of the people who live here seem quite happy to be here by the attitude they have with customer service, and just generally a happy and friendly bunch. They live in paradise so why wouldn't they be happy.***

***20/20 hindsight we should have allowed a few more days for NZ in order to spend some time in the most spectacular place. A month on the South Island would be good. The next time I post we will be in Sydney.***

***More later.***

***March 1,2013***

***Good evening from Sydney AU***

***Our flight got to Sydney about 5:30PM and we got to our apartment about 7PM. We gained two hours in transit.***

***The apartment was exactly as described, really nice. We are on the 32nd floor. We also have air conditioning for the first time since Auckland. Yeah! And we are in the CBD, so lots of stuff around us.***

***It is about 11:15PM and I am doing laundry. When we got here and got our things up to our apartment we then went for a good walk. The energy in the streets is amazing, we both said it was like being in NYC. It's really funny coming from the beauty and calmness of NZ to the craziness of the city.***

***Tomorrow when we get out we will probably go down around Darling Harbor and The Rocks. We will take some pictures also.***

***Goodnight for now, love to all.***

***More later***

***Good evening from Sydney, 03/02/2013***

***Today we got off to a little bit of a late start, it was raining so we decided to take the free bus down to Circular Quay and the Sidney Opera House. We walked around for just a bit and the rain picked up again so we decided to stop for some Chinese. By the time we were done the rain had slacked off so we walked around the Sydney Opera House and took quite a few pictures in the area. There is construction going on down there so hopefully we will get some better photos from the ferry boat tomorrow.***

***We walked back this evening and I took some photos of buildings and stuff that I liked.***

***Sydney is a very vibrant city and there is so much going on all over.***

***Tomorrow it looks like there will be rain again but the plan is to go down to the area they call "the rocks", Darling Harbor, and to take a ferry or boat out for a bit.***

***Monday we are getting together with a couple who live in Sydney who want to show us areas above the city that they like. The couple is Valerie & Ian and I “met” Valerie on the website “Cruise Critic” in the Australia section where she has been extremely helpful answering my many Australia questions.***

***Love to all, more later.***

***Tuesday March 5, 2013 Canberra AU***

***Good evening,***

***We had a busy few days in Sydney and we are really glad that we will have a few more days in Sydney towards the end of April.***

***On Sunday we went back down to Circular Quay and once there we decided to take the ferry to Manly, and were the last two people to get on that ferry. As the ferry departs Sydney it goes around the opera house so we were able to take pictures of the Sydney Opera House from the harbor side. The ferry ride to Manly must be about 15 miles and as we got closer to Manly the ferry crosses the opening in the headlands to the Tasman Sea. In between the headlands there are swells coming in from the Tasman Sea and the ferry ride becomes more exciting then normal and can get wet if you are on the outside deck of the ferry.***

***Manly is a quaint resort town with a very beautiful beach that stretches off into the distance. There are many shops and restaurants that cater to the tourists or weekend visitor. After having lunch at one of the outdoor restaurants we went down to the beach and watched the surfers ride the waves, there must have been at least 50 surfers. After checking out the stalls of some sidewalk vendors we had the obligatory ice cream cone before taking the ferry back to Sydney. As the ferry crossed the headlands into the harbor the swells were still coming in from the Tasman Sea, and once again the ferry ride got exciting and numerous people got wet including me.***

***When the ferry delivered us back to Sydney we walked to "the rocks", which is the original settlement in Sydney. We walked around and listened to live music, including at the oldest tavern that dated back to the 1830's, where there was a quartet playing old Irish songs. One of the highlights was listening to two ladies who will never see 70 again singing Blue Moon. It was obvious they were having a great time. We walked around the rocks some more looking at the old buildings and street vendors before taking a taxi back to the hotel.***

***On Monday the Australian couple, Valerie & Ian (who will be on our Panama Canal cruise in April 2014) picked us up and took us to some of their favorite sites that would not be found by the typical tourist. The ride started crossing Sydney's harbor bridge and Jim was able to get several pictures of the bridge from the car. The ride covered several hours with Valerie and Ian sharing their favorite places. We went back to Manly, but this time by car, and saw numerous beaches north of Manly and visited several lookout points on the north head of the harbor entrance. Early in our drive we stopped at a cafe in Manly and they had their morning coffee and we had tea and water. Later on we stopped at an open air restaurant, that they called a "pub", that overlooked the marina of sail boats where we had lunch. They returned us to our hotel and we plan to get together again when we return to Sydney in late April.***

***Today, Tuesday March 5, all of our luggage and us took a taxi ride to an Avis rental car location where we picked up a car and drove to Canberra, the capitol of Australia.***

***Tomorrow we plan to sleep late.***

***A note about Canberra. It was not originally in our plans but then we thought, humm it’s Australia’s capitol so we should probably go there.***

***Checking into our hotel in Canberra we asked what they recommend visitors see. With a rather bewildered look the young lady said, and I quote “we don’t really get tourists here”. So off we went to Costco.***

***Our best to all.***

***More later.***

***Melbourne AU 03/09/2013***

***Hi everybody,***

***We have had two days of running the streets of Melbourne now. It has been unseasonably hot, so no jackets needed here.***

***First a bit about Australia population.***

***The population of Australia is 22.6 million.The population of Sydney is 4.6 million.The population of Melbourne is 4.1 million***

***Melbourne is a thriving and bustling city with great public transportation. Melbourne is by far the most European city in Australia. The architecture of many of the older buildings are like you would see in London. There is also a fair amount of Italian look to some of the older buildings. As you travel around the city there is always the mix of old and new.***

***On Friday (our first day) we got on the free tram and road it through the CBD and got off at Flinders Street Station next to the Yarra River. We walked around this area a couple of hours, looking at the sights, eating ice cream, taking pictures and watching the people.***

***It's hard to tell if the most predominate population are Asian or Caucasian, but that seems to be the total.***

***Due to the unseasonably warm temperatures we finally retreated to a bar to cool off where we each had a couple of lemon/lime and bitters. They were quite refreshing. After getting cooled off we started to walk back to our hotel and came upon the Red Spice restaurant where we had dinner.***

***The dining tables in the restaurant are about 50 feet long with seating on each side. We were seated across from Phil and Chris who are father and son, who we conversed with the entire time we were eating. Phil is retired from the Australian Armed Forces and had spent 3 years in Washington DC on a military assignment. Chris is an Emergency Physician who just completed 6 months in London. Phil and Chris gave us many tips on what to do in Melbourne and many other Australian cities. They also asked us many questions about the USA now. Once dinner was over Phil and Chris left for a rugby game, they were rooting for opposite teams.***

***After leaving the restaurant we continued to our hotel where we were in for the night.***

***Due to Melbourne's heat we decided to go to the Imax Theater at the Melbourne Museum where we saw "The Last Reef". Having purchased passes for the Melbourne trams we then took a tram ride to St. Kilda Beach. St. Kilda Beach, in addition to being a beach, has an old amusement park called Luna Park and an old theater called The Palais. Not seeing anything we wanted to do at the beach we rode the tram back to our hotel.***

***We went to dinner at an Italian restaurant called Scugnizzo where we had an excellent dinner and then returned to our hotel for the night.***

***Tomorrow is still supposed to be hot so we haven't quite decided what we will do.***

***There are new pictures on Snapfish.***

***Love to all.***

***More later.***

***Good evening from Tasmania 03/11/2013***

***Hi everyone,***

***We had a quick flight from Melbourne to Hobart Tasmania, picked up our car and the Tom Tom found our hotel. Much to our surprise it was closed for the "holiday". After a couple of calls the on site manager did come down, and we got checked in.***

***We went for a walk through a beautiful park across from the hotel, the trees are amazing! Past the park there is a strip if restaurants and bars that are in a long area of multi-story buildings that appear to be very old. Jim and I are thinking they were probably old factories or maybe even prison buildings.***

***No pictures taken today but we definitely will be taking pictures tomorrow. So much to see, so little time.***

***Best wishes to all and to all a good night.***

***More later.***

***Good evening from Adelaide AU 03/16/2013***

***Hi everybody,***

***On Tuesday March 12 in Tasmania we drove South to the end of the island where Port Arthur is. We looked around a bit and then returned to Hobart and walked around the town a bit.***

***On Wednesday March 13 we walked around Hobart some more and then went on Louisa's Walk. Louisa's Walk is a dramatization of the true story of a lady who left Ireland with her three sons after her husband passed away, looking to make a better life for her boys. Once her money had run out she stole a loaf of bread to feed her children, and was caught and sentenced to 7 years prison in Tasmania and her sons were put in an orphanage in England. While in prison in Tasmania she was "selected" to be a maid to a man who ended up being very cruel, getting her pregnant, only to throw her out, sending her back to Tasmania. She did eventually get out of prison and married and had another child, and she and her husband were both able to work.***

***The women's prisons in Tasmania were called "the women's factory". Only the ruins of them are left now. Probably 1 1/2 years ago or so I had seen a write up on Luisa's Walk in Trip Advisor and it was the one thing I really wanted to do in Tasmania. The couple who started the walk are both from England and when they came to Tasmania they had a great interest in the history of what was England's prison land, and they also had an interest in performing so came up with the idea of performing the true story in the form of a two hour walk.***

***On Thursday we took a boat cruise to Bruny Island. This was a full day tour starting with a bus ride from Hobart to dock on Bruny Island where we took a three hour cruise down the East side of Bruny Island. Seeing much of the rugged landscape, vegetation and the wildlife on the island. One of the higlights of the cruise was seeing a large colony of fur seals, adult males and pups sunning themselves. The females are in a different colony.***

***Once we got to the South end of Bruny Island we were only 1600 miles straight ahead to Antarctica. Or if we had turned left it was several thousand miles to South America.***

***On Friday we flew from Hobart Tasmania to Adelaide via Melbourne. We got to our hotel about 10PM.***

***Today we took a tram from Victoria Square (which is right across the street from our hotel) to the beach town of Glenelg. Walked around and took a few pictures, had lunch in a Mexican restaurant, walked back to the beach and then noticed the tram was waiting.***

***I was cold and had on a jacket and there were people out in the water. The Mexican food was "authentic Australian Mexican food".***

***Tomorrow morning we check out and set off in our rental car for Kangaroo Island. Hopefully there will be kangaroos.***

***Take care, more later.***

***Good morning again from Adelaide***

***Thursday March 21***

***Greetings everyone,***

***We left Kangaroo Island yesterday morning and got back to Adelaide yesterday evening.***

***Here it is 8:41AM Thursday March 21.***

***What can I say about Kangaroo Island..... the sea is a beautiful blue, and that is about it. Kangaroo Island was an add on after we had already worked out most of the trip, it sounded like a good idea at the time, there would be kangaroos, right?***

***So back on the mainland and planning to go to the Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute today. Not sure what went on with the weather during the night but the wind is blowing extremely hard out there, forecast is 23C (about 73F) and rain most of the day with gale force winds. It may be a day to use a taxi.***

***While at Tandanya we bought two Aboriginal painting which will be shipped to us when we get home.***

***We will be in Adelaide until tomorrow, then we head to Port Augusta for two nights, then we head to the outback.***

***I will update later today assuming I can get on the internet again.***

***Hope everyone is well, take care.***

***More later.***

***Good evening everybody,***

***Here in Port Augusta it is Friday, March 22 @ 10:15 PM.***

***The last I wrote we were in Adelaide again, a city we both really like. Adelaide was a stop over point and it worked out well both times.***

***Yesterday we were able to go to the Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute. This is something we were both really interested in. The history and circumstances of the Aboriginal people is very similar to the Native American people, (only a hundred plus years earlier in America). In Australia it is called assimilation.***

***So today was a travel day but not too bad. We left Adelaide about 10AM and arrived in Port Augusta about 3PM. PA is a stop over point also. We will be here two nights and then head into the outback for Coober Pedy and beyond.***

***Tomorrow we plan to go to the Wadlata Outback Center, http://www.wadlata.sa.gov.au/ will look around Port Augusta a bit, do a little laundry (since this place has a washer & dryer), and have an early night before heading into the outback.***

***As Jim said earlier today, it is good that tomorrow we don't have to pick up a car, return a car or catch a plane. We have been gone 5 1/2 weeks and have about 4 1/2 weeks remaining in Australia, and a lot of "looking" yet to do before we get on that ship.***

***When you think about it this is similar to someone landing in Miami, driving to NYC, heading out to Seattle, and then Los Angeles, stop off in Houston, and back to Miami. Kind of crazy, but a once in a lifetime trip.***

***Jim had said the next trip after the cruise to the Panama Canal, he wanted to do an Alaskan cruise and Canadian railway. The 2014 RCCL Alaska cruise schedule was released a few days ago so I booked it for August 2014. Anybody want to go to Alaska?***

***The tote board so far, top 5:***

***1. New Zealand South Island***

***2. Sydney AU***

***3. Tazmania Island AU***

***4. Adelaide AU***

***5. Melbourne AU***

***OK, I have rambled on and it is bedtime.***

***Hope everyone is well, take care.***

***BTW The pictures are up to date on Snapfish but we haven't taken many in the last few days.***

***More later.***

***Good evening from the edge of the outback.***

***Port Augusta is a small community of about 15,000. I was really surprised at that number, I would have guessed larger than that. It seems to be a fairly busy little town and there are certainly signs of growth and building.***

***Today we went to the Wadlata Outback Center. This is a really well done and interesting museum that covers not only the outback, but the changes over thousands of years that left what is now known as Australia.***

***We also each bought a hat to help shield our faces and ears as we head into the heat.***

***After the museum visit we went to the largest grocery store which is Woolworth. It is really close to the size of the Randalls in Pecan Grove. We picked up a few things to carry with us on our trip tomorrow. In doing this I thought I would tell you about prices in Australia. These prices aren't due to this being a small town but are typical of what we have seen everywhere we have been. So here are a few prices and I'll start with gasoline.***

***Gasoline $ 1.55 per LTR so roughly $6.00 per gallon***

***Water 24 pack of 375 ML $11.00 on sale, regular price $28.55***

***Gatorade powder makes 8 LTR's $9.99***

***One 2 LTR Diet Coke $3.79***

***1.4 KG bananas $6.28***

***I have updated the pictures on Snapfish. I think pictures are going to start being really interesting in the remainder of our land travel due to the distance of each area from the one before.***

***And of course in my customary OCD self I called Ken, the owner of the cave we will be staying in for the next three nights to let him know what time we are leaving Port Augusta for Coober Pedy. I told him if we hadn't shown up by dark to send somebody looking for us. He said he would come looking for us himself.***

***http://www.undergroundbandb.com.au/***

***Time to get the laundry packed away and get organized for tomorrow's travel. We hope everyone is doing well, take care. More later.***

***Good evening from Coober Pedy 3/26/2013***

***Good evening,***

***We left Port Augusta Saturday morning to drive to Coober Pedy, a very long, all day affair. We***

***arrived at the Underground B & B where we have stayed the last 3 nights, around 6PM.***

***Coober Pedy is the opal mining capitol of the world where opals are mined by individuals and not major corporations. Coober Pedy's other claim to fame is that most of the residents and businesses are what they call "underground" where due to the extreme heat in the summertime the building is done in a cave or the side of a hill.***

***Our room at the underground B & B is a recent addition, a very nice bedroom with ensuite, living area & kitchen, and patio which has been excavated in the side of a hill and was completed only three months ago. The suite is very well done, with extremely nice fittings and furnishings. It is hard to believe we are staying in a cave.***

***Yesterday we took a 7 hour tour across several cattle stations in the outback to get to what the Australians call the painted desert. Unlike Arizona's painted desert, the Australians painted desert only covers a very small area that includes hills, cliffs and ravines with a variety of colors. (These pictures are on Snapfish).***

***Today we took a 9 hour tour over dirt roads to William's Creek, one of the old railroad stations near the end of the line of the original railroad that is no longer functioning. The tour included a bar at William's Creek that was built out of old railroad ties, the rooms of several railroad stations along the way and the final railroad of the original line that included an old museum and the iconic pink roadhouse.***

***We have been in Australia since March 1st and have still not seen a live kangaroo. We have decided that kangaroos, like unicorns, are a figment of someone's imagination and do not really exist. But the bush flies more then make up for it, and not in a good way. Every time we have gotten out of the car in the past two days we have been swarmed by flies where at least 2 dozen flies are circling your head. Our tour guide showed us how to use eucalyptus branches to fend of the flies. My (Jeannie) opinion is the fly net works better then the branch. Once we got back in the car to head to the next place it was a challenge to get the flies to leave the car.***

***Coober Pedy's population is about 2500. There is one good restaurant and it is Greek. That is where we have eaten the past 3 nights.***

***Last night at the Greek restaurant we were seated at a table for 7. There was the 2 of us, Ana & Ken are hosts, their friend Phil, Tony Wong (the largest opal dealer in the world) and Tony's employee Wilson, who speaks no English. Ken and Phil are native born Australians, Ana is from Portugal, Tony and Wilson are from Hong Kong but primarily live in Coober Pedy. Tony had just returned from the gem show in Tucson which Ana had attended last year since Ken is also an opal miner.***

***The thought occurred to me that it would be funny to have a few minutes of video of all the conversations at this table to send on to you all also.***

***Tomorrow we leave for Ayres Rock, another very long travel day.***

***We hope everyone is well, take care***

***More later.***

***Good evening from Uluru 3/27/2013***

***Good evening,***

***Today we traveled from Coober Pedy to Uluru or Ayers Rock. It was a long, long day.***

***760 K, about 460 miles on 2 lane paved road. Along that 760 K there were 5 gas stations, or petrol as the Aussies say. The last gas we bought was $8.00 gallon. Also along that 760 K there was 1 saloon about 2/3 of the way here where we had a late "brunch" at the bar. When I say saloon, I really mean saloon. Think Gunsmoke.***

***It had to be at least 50 years old, probably older with no remodel.***

***Since tomorrow is a non travel/non tour day we plan on taking it easy and sleeping late.***

***The most energetic thing we will do is go to take pictures of Ayers Rock. We certainly won't try to climb it.***

***On this trip we have had all kinds of accommodations from really nice surprises to motels that in the US would probably be 2 star, to one that was really bad. I haven't taken pictures of many, just a few who have been nice surprises. The one here is one of the nice surprises.***

***Two of the things we had not seen are live kangaroos and camels. We were about 3 K from Uluru and Jim slowed down to keep from running into the camel that was crossing the road. As it turned out there were two of them. They took their time, crossed the road and then went into the bushes. We did get a couple of pictures.***

***All photos are on Snapfish including the camels. I started a second album.***

***Hope everyone is well and that you have a good week.***

***Take care, more later.***

***Good evening from Uluru 3/28/2013***

***Good evening everybody, Or good morning in the US.***

***Today we slept in and got some must needed rest.***

***We left the hotel early afternoon and drove to Uluru or Ayers Rock as it was originally named. If anyone has any interest here is a link***

***http://www.uluru-australia.com/about-uluru/uluru-facts/***

***We left home just over 6 weeks ago and have just under 4 weeks until we board Rhapsody of the Sea where we will have time to rest up from the NZ/OZ land portion of our trip.***

***Tomorrow we drive to Alice Springs.***

***Thinking of everyone at home and hope everyone is well.***

***Take care, more later.***

***Heading West***

***Good evening,***

***Just a quick note this evening, here it is 7:14PM 03/31/13.***

***We fly out of Alice Springs (and the Outback) in the morning and head West for Perth. Alice Springs is smack dab in the middle between Adelaide on the South coast and Darwin on the North coast of Australia.***

***Jim went to the Transportation Museum this morning in Alice Springs. The museum shows the development of road trains from the 1930's to now, that are used to move freight in and out of the Outback.***

***Road trains of the current day have three trailers that are approx. 50 feet long each and the total length of the road train probably exceeds 200 feet. They are scary. Each road train has a total of 16 axles with a total of 62 tires. This is what we have been traveling with on the 2 lane "highways".***

***From this point on we only have one leg of car travel left and that is from Brisbane to Sydney right before the cruise. Jim says I was very good considering I don't do car trips very well.***

***Primarily we have spent the time in Alice Springs resting up after a whole lot of car travel.***

***Hope everyone is well, time for me to get organized for the morning flight.***

***Take care, more later.***

***G’day from Perth AU April 1, 2013***

***Good afternoon everybody,***

***We are now on the far West coast of Australia and if I wasn't already confused by the various time changes, I am now. We changed time zones by 1 1/2 hours so we are now 13 hours ahead of CST, or whatever it is that my Sony laptop tells me the time at home is.***

***Because of a very early flight when we leave Perth for Darwin we decided to stay at the closest airport hotel, which in the case of Perth, is Best Western. It is not Best Western like we have, it is an apartment with a washer and dryer. Living room, dining area, bedroom, etc. They are called Best Western Ascot. This one has the shower with no shower pan so basically when you take a shower the bathroom floor gets washed. This one does have a lot bigger bathroom then the last one plus it has a shower curtain, so that should help. Having the dryer is a plus also. The funny thing about the dryers is- every place where we have had a dryer the dryer is mounted to the wall upside down.***

***On showers- several places the shower has been like the one above, no shower pan, also no curtain. The floor gets washed every time one showers.***

***Airports and airplanes- you know how we have been accustomed to boarding and exiting the plane through a Jet way for the last 30 or 40 years or so? None of our flights in New Zealand or Australia have had a jet way. Not a complaint, just an observation.***

***Also when flying in New Zealand and Australia we get real meals and beverages at no additional charge. (I'm sure the charge is in the fare, but still, it is nice.)***

***Beverages- we have discovered ginger beer (non alcohol), and we also discovered (while in Melbourne) Lemon, Lime & Bitters. We also discovered Lemon Squash (not the vegetable) someplace too.***

***Our plans for Perth-Tomorrow we plan to go to the Caversham Wildlife Park and then to the CBD to walk around and see what there is to see. Another day we will go to Freemantle which is a town on the coast that everybody says we should visit. We also plan to take the ferry to Rottnest Island one day. We are in Perth until April 5.***

***It is hot in Perth, fall has not begun here yet. Temperatures this week mid 90's. I need to get in my suitcase and see if the hats we bought in the Outback survived the trip. Hopefully here we won't have the bush flies so we won't need the face net, just the hat.***

***Meals- Normally we have been having just one meal a day, so Jim has adapted to my normal meal habit. Food is very expensive here. It is not unusual for us to have a $90-$100 dinner. I'm not talking fancy place, just regular little cafe, restaurant or bar. Jim is ready for some good Mexican food from LaCasona. I am too, but it will be a while yet.***

***I guess that is all for now, we hope everyone is doing well.***

***Love to all.***

***More later.***

***Perth AU 4/02/2013***

***Hi everyone,***

***Today we went to the Caversham Wildlife Park. This is a family owned wildlife park, they originally bought the park in 1987. http://www.cavershamwildlife.com.au/about.html***

***It was a very enjoyable day. The park is so well done, and as much as possible the animals live in what would be their natural surroundings. I have put the pictures on Snapfish and there are probably around 150 kangaroo pictures. There is even one of a "roaching" kangaroo.***

***We left the park around 3PM and headed downtown. Jim was able to find a parking garage down in the CBD area where we wanted to walk around. Perth is a bustling city.***

***There are some areas where they have pedestrian malls, (kind of like they have done in Times Square) and that is mainly where we were walking around. We ended up having dinner down there then stopped at the market for some Gatorade and came back to the hotel.***

***There has been a mining boom in Perth and today I noticed an article about the median price of a home in Perth having risen to $619,000. Whoa, that is ridiculous!***

***It is getting late so time for bed. We will have a busy day tomorrow.***

***We hope everyone is doing well. Take care.***

***More later.***

***Good evening from Perth 4/03/2013***

***Today we drove to Freemantle, the suburb of Perth that "everybody" said we should go see.***

***Freemantle, as with Perth CBD, has a lot of British influence in the architecture of the old buildings, so you have a lot of old, and cared for construction sitting in the shadow of it's skyscraper neighbor.***

***Lots of high dollar real estate, homes overlooking the water. A business district with lots of small eating places, bars, stores, kind of the touristy thing. We had lunch, went into the grocery store and got back to our apartment about 5PM. It is laundry night so I wanted to get back early anyway.***

***Tomorrow we plan to drive over to Swan Valley to take a look and have lunch, then it will be an early night because we have a real early flight from Perth to Darwin on Thursday.***

***The pictures are up to date on Snapfish, there are now two albums for this trip.***

***We hope everyone is doing well and that the Houston area got some rain without damage.***

***Love to all.***

***More later.***

***Good evening from Darwin 4/06/2013***

***Hi everybody,***

***We arrived in Darwin yesterday afternoon and it's been a comedy of errors ever since.***

***Starting with- We deplaned and got our luggage and Jim went off to the restroom, while he was in there I arranged transportation to the hotel and our luggage was loaded on the shuttle, so I'm just waiting for him and when he comes out and says he thinks he left his iPad on the plane. I gave him the hotel info and got on the shuttle. Jim went to the Qantas desk and they called the Qantas agent within security and they said they had the iPad. After picking up the iPad he went to the shuttle and when she tried to start it the battery was dead. So they had to wait for the next shuttle.***

***Jim gets to the hotel and we leave to go for a short walk along the waterfront and it was extremely hot and humid similar to Houston in August or September. We get back to the hotel and decided to have dinner in the hotel restaurant since we were too hot to go out again.***

***The dinner was definitely lacking in quality, mine was supposed to be a Thai vegetarian dish and it was swimming in grease so I just picked out the vegetables and had a little rice and that was it. We decided to order dessert, to make up for it and about 20 minutes later our poor waitress came out of the kitchen and said the "chef" said he was out of the dessert so she told him he should have let her know what he was out of but she had already sold it so he better make some. She kept going back to the kitchen and then stopping back by to say just a few more minutes. Ultimately the "chef" came out and said his oven wasn't working right so could he give us something else, which at this point was no charge, so we told him ice cream would be fine. After a few more minutes the ice cream is served and we head to our room about 8:30, at this point we had been up since 3AM due to an early flight and we were both very tired.***

***We walk in our room and discover it is quite warm and very humid. Jim adjusted the thermostat and after about an hour it's not getting better so he called the front desk. They send a "maintenance" guy who walks in, looks at the thermostat and he turns it up higher and said that is all he can do. About 30 minutes passes and Jim calls and asks for the manager on duty who comes on and says we can either change to a different room and move completely or they will give us an additional room to sleep in and maintenance will fix the AC tomorrow. We were too tired to move all our stuff so they bring us a key card for a room two doors down. We picked up the electronics and such and go to the other room. Jim finally gets to bed about midnight, me about 1AM.***

***This morning we slept in, took our showers and got our stuff moved back and the real maintenance guy comes and after a few minutes he has the AC cooling and he was very nice, said to have them call him if there is any more problem.***

***About this time I discover I don't know where my glasses are. We searched both hotel rooms and all our stuff and cannot find them. I know that I had them in both of the rooms but do not know where they went. It's not like they would do anyone any good. So as we are leaving the hotel to go out I asked them to notify housekeeping in case they turn up. We then talked with the on duty manager about our previous evening and gave kudos to the poor waitress and the second maintenance guy, Nick.***

***We leave and I wanted to see if I could get a pedicure and mini-manicure at a place just a little across from the hotel and yes, they could take me right away. Jim asks where is a place to get a hair cut and they tell him. We meet up afterwards and lets just say Jim's hair is shorter, really shorter. We decide to come back to our hotel until it gets a little cooler and get up to our room, and guess what, the keys no longer work. Jim goes down and they reprogram the key cards. Jim says "just think how bad this would have been if we were in a cheap joint".***

***So now we are getting ready to go down to the waterfront for dinner. Hopefully we won't be hit by a bus or something. Just kidding. It is Darwin after all.***

***Love to all. take care.***

***More later.***

***Good evening April 8, 2013***

***Hi everyone,***

***It is Monday about 10:30PM, just want to say "hi" and we hope everyone is doing well.***

***Tomorrow we leave Darwin which is towards NW coast for Cairns towards the NE coast. We have a late flight so won't get to Cairns until about 11PM. Fortunately the hotel has extended our check out time to 2PM after which we will just hang around the lobby area until about 4PM and then take the shuttle to the airport.***

***We took a few pictures here in Darwin and they are on Snapfish.***

***Darwin is not a place we would come back to.***

***I have emailed a tour operator in Cairns and we will book a couple of tours probably, and maybe rent a car for a day to drive to Port Douglas. It really feels like the trip is winding down now. We have been gone almost two months.***

***Best wishes to all, hope everyone is well, take care.***

***More later.***

***Good evening from Cairns AU 4/10/2013***

***Good evening everyone,***

***Today was our first day in Cairns. We actually got to our apartment about 11:30PM which wasn't too bad.***

***This morning we walked just a little way down from the apartments to a tour operator who has all kinds of tours in the area. We decided to do the tour to Green Island which takes you out to the Great Barrier Reef and for those not snorkeling or diving there is an option for a glass bottom boat and a semi-submersible, which are the two we did. We used to snorkel in the Caribbean, but the GBR is a place for strong snorkelers. It was a nice, well operated tour however Mother Nature decided this was a good week for rain, thunderstorms and wind. The forecast was for all week but by the time we went to dinner it was not raining, so who knows, maybe it will clear off for us.***

***We have a tour scheduled for tomorrow and the next day, so hopefully they won't have to cancel them. Tomorrow's tour is a boat along the coast and into some hidden away mangrove areas. The next day's tour is a cable car up to a rain forest and the village of Kuranda, and a scenic rail train brings you back along a very picturesque area.***

***We haven't been here long enough to look around in the CBD yet, but if the weather cooperates we can probably do that tomorrow after our boat ride.***

***We wish everyone well, and hope the weather down there is being good.***

***Today I finally got 3G/4G and emails on my phone for the first time in quite a long while. Yay! I have texts I've written some time back that have never been delivered. The places we have been have been very remote so it is good to be back on this side of Australia.***

***Time for bed, hope everyone is doing well.***

***Love to all and take care.***

***More later***

***Good evening from Cairns 4/12/2013***

***Hello everyone,***

***We left home two months ago today, and in the morning we will leave Cairns for Brisbane on the Gold Coast.***

***We have really enjoyed Cairn, it is a really lovely city with a population of about 150,000, and there are lots of things to do and see. Cairns would definitely be towards the top of the "if we came back to NZ and OZ" list. We have been busy since we arrived and there are plenty more things we would like to see/do.***

***The latest photos are on Snapfish.***

***We hope everyone is doing well.***

***Good thoughts and wishes for everyone.***

***More Later***

***Good evening from Brisbane AU 4/13/2013***

***Good evening everybody,***

***We arrived in Brisbane late afternoon, got a cab to our apartment, got everything in and situated and that's about it. Jim went on a brief walk to sort of see the lay of the land, I decided to be a bum until tomorrow.***

***This apartment is great! We are on the 25th floor with ceiling to floor windows everywhere. Very contemporary, and a washer & dryer. Yay!***

***We are right on the river and there are supposed to be restaurants and other businesses on the riverfront so we will check that out in the morning. We also want to check out the HOHO bus tomorrow, so we can find what we will want to go back to.***

***We hope everyone is doing well.***

***More later.***

***Brisbane Australia 4/14/2013***

***Good evening from Brisbane,***

***We had a really good day sight seeing on foot, lots of walking, lots to see. We started out on the boardwalk of the river which is right behind our hotel, and walked until it ended. We had lunch at one of the the restaurants on the boardwalk. From there we looked around in the CBD where there are a lot of pedestrian malls. We walked through the Botanical Garden. Took lots of pictures.***

***Brisbane has the mix of European style old buildings and the new and contemporary buildings. It is really a beautiful city.***

***We love Brisbane!!***

***The population of Brisbane is 2.15 million. It is the 3rd largest city in Australia. Tomorrow we will probably take the HOHO bus around. Might take a river boat tour tomorrow also.***

***We plan to pick up the rental car on the 16th so we can go to the Australia Zoo. It is about an hour North of Brisbane. This is the zoo that was started by Steve Irwin’s father and later was taken over by Steve Irwin & wife Terri.***

***The pictures are all on Snapfish.***

***We hope everyone is doing well. Love to all, take care.***

***More later.***

***Brisbane 4/15/2013***

***Good evening everyone.***

***Today was a beautiful day in Brisbane!***

***We walked over to the car rental place to arrange pick up of a car for tomorrow morning. We will go to the Australia Zoo tomorrow, which is at Beerwah QLD, and then Wednesday we will say goodbye to Brisbane and head down the coast towards Port Macquarie.***

***After arranging for the car we walked to find the right bus stop for the circle bus which is a free bus that is hop on hop off. We stayed on for the complete circle then walked down to the river and found a place for lunch. After lunch we walked to the boat stop for the hop on boat and stayed on it for a complete circle and a bit more. By the time we got off the water bus we started toward our apartment. It is amazing how early it is getting dark. By 6PM it was completely dark.***

***All pictures are on Snapfish.***

***We hope everyone is doing well.***

***Best wishes to all, and take care.***

***More later.***

***Brisbane April 16, 2013***

***Hi everyone,***

***For our last day in Brisbane we drove up to the Australia Zoo and Wildlife Park. It is outstanding! This is a huge wildlife park and they keep the habitat as close to natural as possible. The Africa area is huge. The kangaroo areas are huge and there are double fence and double gates pretty much like a dog park would be, and you just walk among the kangaroos. It was fantastic, I loved it! Jim liked it also, maybe not quite as much as me.***

***Rain was forecast for today, tomorrow etc. so I put 2 travel umbrellas and 2 rain ponchos in a bag and took them along. When we got there and were getting out of the car guess who said "It doesn't look like rain we don't need them"? So about 3 hours into it thunder and lightning started and then the rain came, and boy did it come. We were soaked but we got to see everything we wanted to then went into a shop and are now the proud owners of an Australia Zoo golf umbrella.***

***Tomorrow we head further South. We will spend 2 nights at Port Macquarie and then on to Sydney where we will be for 5 nights. Then it will be time to board the ship.***

***We hope everyone is well.***

***Love to all, take care.***

***More later.***

***Good evening, back in Sydney 4/19/2013***

***Good evening everyone,***

***Yesterday we took a boat trip out of Port Macquarie, it was a beautiful day. We called it an early night so we could get an early start for Sydney.***

***We arrived back in Sydney mid afternoon and I got us checked in, and Jim went to return the rental car.***

***After spending two weeks in New Zealand, we arrived in Sydney March 1.***

***Since that time we have been making our way around Australia, and today we returned to Sydney. I can't believe it is almost time to get on Rhapsody of the Sea.***

***We booked this cruise in November 2011, and at that time the actual trip to NZ and OZ were just a loose plan, but over time it started coming together and I ate, slept, and breathed travel to OZ and NZ.***

***For a couple of weeks prior to our leaving home on February 12th, friends and family would ask "are you getting excited?" I wasn't really excited but rather in shock that it had all come together, and it was really going to happen. My answer was that I would get excited when we got to the airport.***

***This has been the most fantastic time I could ever have imagined. We have been everywhere! At some point I want to figure out how many planes, boats, ferries, rental cars, and hotels/apartments we have been to.***

***The miles walked I could never figure out but we needed it anyway.***

***I quite frankly am in love with these wonderful places we have been for the last (almost) 10 weeks. I told Jim he was going to have to drag me onto Rhapsody, I don't want to go.***

***At least a good portion of people boarding will be from OZ and NZ.***

***We hope everyone is doing well.***

***Best thoughts and wishes to you all, take care.***

***More later.***

***Sydney 4/22/2013***

***Good evening everybody,***

***This is our third night in Sydney, I'm doing laundry, Jim's watching TV.***

***Saturday was cold and high wind, we are on the 28th floor and that wind was really howling. We got out Saturday evening to meet Valerie and Ian for dinner, the couple we met when we were in Sydney the first week of March.***

***Sunday it was still pretty cool, we did a little shopping for the cruise and came back to the apartment. The streets and sidewalks were so jammed with people we decided to just get Thai for dinner at a place next to our apartment and stay in.***

***Today we did a little more shopping for the cruise, and after bringing that back by the apartment we went walking to Darling Harbor and then to The Rocks, which is the original settlement of Sydney. We took the harbor cruise again. Jim took some pictures but I haven't taken them off the camera card yet.***

***We aren't sure what we are doing tomorrow, there is a museum, "Powerhouse", that Jim may go to. I may look for a nail salon. I need to get some more G2. We also need to call ATT and change our phones, take the world services off and switch to ship service. Tomorrow evening we are getting together at a historical bar in The Rocks with a few other people from our cruise, and that's about it. I think we are powering down a bit. By tomorrow evening it will be the longest we have been in one place since we left home.***

***Jim has watched a lot of really old USA TV, and quite a bit of rugby. There are three different kinds of rugby and I don't know if he has them all straight yet.***

***We hope everyone is well. When we are getting ready for bed it is early morning over there. It makes communication a little off.***

***Our best wishes to you all. take care.***

***More later.***

***Hello from Honolulu 5/14/2013***

***Good evening everybody,***

***Sorry we dropped off the edge of the sea for so long.***

***We are currently in Honolulu HI, so back in the USA. Our hotel is at Waikiki Beach, we have an almost ocean front view but one block off the water, so it's less expensive. There is a skinny highrise in front of us so our sea view is pretty darned good, only partly obstructed.***

***We boarded Rhapsody of the Sea on April 24 in Sydney and arrived in Honolulu May 11. I absolutely loved the cruise, Jim gives it an 8 out of 10. Neither of us got seasick even on our roughest sea days.***

***By the time we boarded Rhapsody we had been traveling for over 2 1/2 months so we had settled into our little routine, which for the most part was have dinner somewhere and stay in the hotel/apartment after dark. Sooooo about the first three days at sea we followed our routine until we kind of clicked on wow, maybe we should go see what is going on around the ship tonight. That first night we ventured down where the entertainment was going on, when we finally got back to our cabin I started laughing and told Jim "wow, I had no idea that people our age could have so much fun". OK, bear with me on that last sentence, the whole ship wasn't our age but because it was such a long cruise the median age was leaning closer to our ages. So anyway I am really glad that I have the two cruises for 2014 booked.***

***The internet out on the ocean is really, really bad and really, really expensive. I knew the expensive part before the cruise and was prepared for that but the really, really bad part was not expected to be quite that bad.. At sea internet is way worse then dial up from way back there.***

***Saturday and Sunday we walked around Waikiki beach and then the more commercial streets with lots of restaurants and business' etc.***

***Today we went on a tour of the memorial for the battleship Arizona which also included a tour of the battleship Missouri and the Pacific Aviation Museum and the Bowfin submarine. We left the hotel at 6:45AM to catch our bus at 7:00 and by the time we got to the memorial it was about 8:30.***

***The battleship Missouri was first, which is where Japan signed the surrender documents for WWII in Tokyo Bay. The Missouri was operational through the late 1950's when it was decommissioned and then recommissioned and modernized for Desert Storm in the late 1980's/early 1990's when it was decommissioned again. After being stored in Brenerton Washington about 10 years it was moved to Hawaii and put on permanent museum display as part of the memorial for the battleship Arizona. These memorial displays and upkeep are supported totally from donations and ticket sales to visitors. There is no financial assistance from the US government or the Hawaii government.***

***The second part of the tour, the Pacific Air Museum displayed several WWII vintage aircraft in combat settings including the initial attack on Pearl Harbor. After lunch we visited the memorial for the battleship Arizona which started with a 20 minute film of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor with actual film footage (both American and Japanese footage) from the 1930's up through the attack on Pearl Harbor. After viewing the film we boarded a boat that took us to the memorial for the battleship Arizona where we stayed about 20 minutes before returning to shore. The final portion of the tour was the walk through of the Bowfin submarine. We then took the bus back to Waikiki which also included a short tour of downtown Honolulu.***

***Tomorrow Jim is going back to the memorial for a more extensive tour where he isn't hampered by following a tour schedule.***

***Tomorrow I plan to grab a cab to a "pack and mail" store so I can ship our coats, jackets, hoodies and stuff along with what little bit of shopping we have done. That will lighten the load for the trip from here to Las Vegas, and then the trip home. After that I'm going to be a tourist and do some shop looking.***

***Thursday we are doing a one day island hop to Kauai, we leave at 5:30AM and get back about 9PM.***

***Friday we are going on a helicopter that will take us over all of the islands, that is about 3 hours, 12:30PM-3:30PM.***

***They used to have ferries between some of the islands but that was ended due to environmental concerns. I think the last time Jim was on a helicopter was in Vietnam. I have never been on one. It is also doors off for better picture taking, which reminds me, I need to do something to keep me hair from being all over the place.***

***Saturday we are doing an island hop back to Maui where we leave at 5AM and get back about 9PM.***

***Well Jim is snoozing away and I'm getting sleepy so will head to bed. All of the pictures have been caught up on Snapfish. When you see what looks like the same picture 23 times just ignore it and move on. We went on a whale watching boat in Maui and we did see some whales but there are a lot of useless shots in there also.***

***So good evening to all, hope everyone is well, love to all.***

***More later***

***Our day on Kauai 5/17/2013***

***Good evening from Waikiki everyone,***

***Our day started very early. Jim got up at 3AM and I was up at 4AM so we could be all showered and ready in the lobby for our early morning pickup. Today was really nice. They picked us up 5:35AM and took us to the airport and we flew to Kauai (less then 20 minutes) where we were picked up promptly. Michelle was our driver who took us all over the place, and knows Kaual island like the back of her hand,and had lots of stories to tell. Mid afternoon there was also a boat trip on a river out to a grotto. I stayed down near the boat and took pictures and had Jim take the pictures up there. Michelle got us to the airport about 6PM and we just had a few minutes wait and flew back to Waikiki. It was kind of a long day but it was good. I think we will sleep good tonight.***

***I have today's pictures on Snapfish. And speaking of the pictures, all several thousand or so of them, I have changed it on Snapfish so the newest pictures are at the front to make it easier (maybe) to look at them. And another "speaking pictures", since we are both taking pictures on most outings, and we both tend to overtake, there are a lot of extra pictures, so we understand if nobody has time to look at them. It's crazy, I haven't even looked at them except for when I load them on my laptop and then put them on Snapfish, Jim hasn't either. I guess when we get home we will have a long slide show afternoon and evening.***

***We hope everyone is doing well.***

***Love to all, and more later.***

***The helicopter tour over Honolulu 5/17/2013***

***It's about 3:20 AM Saturday and I'm getting ready to get in the shower so I can get ready for our flight back to Maui for a tour of the island.***

***Yesterday was our doors off helicopter tour over Honolulu. That was so much fun, I loved it! There was one other couple and us along with the pilot. I have put the pictures on Snapfish., and there are a lot of them. They will also deliver a CD of the flight to our hotel today or tomorrow. I got to be the "co-pilot", very cool!***

***Time to go, love to all.***

***More later.***

***Maui today 5/18/2013***

***Hi everybody,***

***At 5AM we were picked up and shuttled to the Honolulu airport and flown to Maui, it's just a few minutes flight. We landed at the Lahaina airport and were picked up for the start of the "Maui Hana adventure tour" which goes about half way across the island.***

***We went on a two hour or so drive to the top of the highest mountain in Maui. The mountain rises to 10,023 feet and is located in Haleakala National Park. They say that the mountain, which is lava, actually is 29,000 feet, 19,000 being under water. The volcano last erupted in the 1790's.***

***Most of the area we traveled getting to the park is farm land, sugar cane and pineapple. It takes a pineapple 3 years to reach maturity, I never knew that, from the color you can see pineapple in different levels. There are huge avocado and mango trees. The most interesting looking tree on Maui is called the monkey pod tree.***

***There was a hurricane in the Pacific that caused higher seas and large swells and the surfers have been out in large numbers since yesterday morning all along the coast.***

***We spent a couple of hours in Lahaina checking out the shops and did a little bit of shopping, mostly just walking and looking. It was good to walk around after spending 7 hours on the bus. There is a Bubba Gump in Lahaina, and a Cheeseburger In Paradise.Our flight out of Lahaina was a little after 7PM. Left hotel 5AM- returned to hotel 8PM, I think we need a vacation from our vacation. Just kidding!***

***We have not done much shopping on this trip but what we have done has been mostly in Hawaii. Until I shipped a big box of coats, jackets, etc. when we first got to Honolulu, we had very little luggage space. We have done a little shopping in both Wakiki and Lahaina.***

***Very good fact about Maui, no snakes.***

***I don't know if I had mentioned this, and am too tired (or lazy?) to look, but when we took the helicopter flight yesterday they have a camera attached and the DVD for our ride was waiting at the front desk when we got in tonight. We will watch it tomorrow. It's going to take something pretty amazing to top that flight. I told Jim when we take the Panama cruise we could probably zipline someplace. Not sure how that would compare. They probably don’t have doors off helicopter tours in Alaska, that would be really cold. We will be doing a helicopter flight in Alaska, with doors.***

***Tomorrow we are sleeping late after three busy days. No plans for our last day in Hawaii.***

***We'll probably get out of the hotel at noon or so. We fly out on Monday to meet up with Jean & Janis in Las Vegas.***

***Jim is snoozing away and I hope to be soon also. I just noticed that the Word document that I have strung all these emails together on is now 72 pages. I guess it’s time to go home. Speaking of that, Jeff and Lisa have been gone since May 3 and today Linda texted me that she is going to California. I think my Pecan Grove house lookers are trying to tell me something.***

***We are wishing everyone well and love to all.***

***More later.***

***Aloha 5/19/2013***

***Good evening everybody,***

***We are having a quiet day. We went out for lunch/dinner and then had some frozen yogurt and then back to the hotel. We are both a little tired and will get a good nights sleep before our flight. We leave Honolulu at 3:05PM and arrive Las Vegas at 11:50PM.Our big adventure, which at times seemed at bit daunting and ambitious, and we have had such a fantastic, unbelievable, wonderful time.***

***Flights 16 20,050 miles***

***Rental cars 10 4,160 miles all on the wrong side of the road***

***Hotels/apartments 28***

***Boats/ferry boats 7 140 miles***

***Ship 1 5,620 nautical miles***

***Trains 1***

***Cable car 1***

***Helicopter 1***

***Love to all, we will see you soon.***

***The end.***