

Post



Scott Farnsworth

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Foodie Tours-r-Us - April 5, 2025

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SUMMARY

Fun and filling foodie tour of Sydney - fish, calamari, oysters, Chinese dumplings, meat pie with mashed potatoes and mushy peas, famous watermelon and strawberry cakes, 3 beers and a flight of 4 wines. Needless to say, no dinner tonight. We did enjoy evening cocktails at Bar 83 atop the Sydney Eye. - Karen

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DETAIL

It is still dark outside when we awaken at 6:30. It's not the best for getting over jet lag, but the sky gets lighter fairly quickly.

We down many cups of instant coffee. The coffee wouldn't normally be noteworthy, but over here, like in Europe, the electricity comes out of the walls at 220 volts. That's almost twice the power that we have in the United States. The water boils very quickly and I'm jealous every time.

I take a surprise shower. A surprise shower means that every so often the water briefly gets a whole lot warmer... SURPRISE! You have to quickly get out of the stream for a few seconds. We can't correlate it to someone else using the sink or anything else. Oh, well.

We do the daily ritual of putting on the sunblock. That's important because of the sun here. I've always heard about this but didn't understand why. The reason is three-fold. 1) The earth's orbit around the sun isn't even. In December we're about 7% closer to the sun than in June, thus more radiation. In that month us northerners are all indoors, while Aussies are all out and about. 2) All that hairspray we used to put on our coifs in the '70s? The "hair net"? That was CFCs (since banned) but that destroyed a lot of the ozone layer, especially at the South Pole. Down here we're not too far from there. And 3) the weather here is so nice, everyone's just outside enjoying it. Bingo, you gotta wear sun block.

Eventually, it's time to go out and enjoy the day. Yesterday was our tour of Sydney. Today is another tour, this time, what else? food. All four of us were scheduled to take the tour, but apparently the 10 miles we walked on our first day did a number on one of Don's ankles. He said this happens from time to time. The plan is for him to sit this one out. More for us, but we'll miss him.

In the hotel drive-through, we meet today's Tour Guide, Helen. A Sheila as they would say in these parts. She's fun, jovial and very talkative. Good attributes for a Tour Guide. Pretty much all of the foodie tours we've ever been on have been walking. This one we learn will be driving. Apparently, Sydney has tons of great food and restaurants, however, they're not close to each other. Helen talks pretty much non-stop, even while she driving. Often she's doing both at once as she looks back at us. Yikes!

We're learning that Sydney has a huge number of very cute, fun, unique neighborhoods, but they're not that close to each other. If you're here without a car, it's not a big deal. They have a new metro system, an older rail system, and a wonderful, quick and easy ferry system. The Sydney Harbor snakes into a large number of different arms, headed out in different directions. The ferry system provides quick, efficient and inexpensive access to many of the best parts of the city, supplying gorgeous views while you're doing it. And there's never traffic on the water!

We're not alone on this foodie tour, there'll be two other couples. At their hotel they clamber aboard, Dave, Mark, Marguerite, and Dana, friends from Louisiana. We southerners all hit it off splendidly and enjoy our day together.

First stop was the fish market where they sell 50 tons of fish and seafood a day, wholesale (during the week). Today's Saturday, so that part's quiet but they also have a huge retail space with a slew of vendors. Whole and prepared seafoods of all varieties are on offer, including very large lobsters and crabs. Pretty but definitely not cheap. There are many restaurants as well as vendors selling ready to eat sushi, sashimi, fried fish, raw oysters, calamari, and more. Helen gets our group too much of each and we sample it all. Truth be told it's all very tender and fresh with delicious flavor. We worry for being able to handle all the food that's coming.

Our second stop (like all of them) is a little ways away: Lotus Asian. It's on the Darling Harbor (a short walk from our hotel) in a newly renovated part of town called Barangaroo. There are lots of places to eat and drink besides the Lotus. We have tea, dumplings, mushrooms with oyster sauce, and fried calamari, all delicious and thankfully reasonably sized tastes.

Our next stop is the venerable Harry's Café de Wheels, a place from back in the 1930s. Originally called Harry's Café, it just popped up one day and got very popular. The city said "add wheels and move 15 inches a day or pay taxes" and so he did, hence the name. The wheels are long gone but the name, and the star attraction (meat pies), remain. Lots of famous people have come by to try the hand-held meat pies with lots of mashed potatoes and mushy peas on top. It is what it promises and we split one per couple, sampling some local beer to boot. We can imagine after a long night of heavy drinking this would be heavenly.

Quite a ways away we're now in a hyper-hip part of town where we stop into Black Star Pastry. Their pastries are works of art, made with the freshest ingredients and precision assembly. We get their famous strawberry/watermelon cake and another mocha-something cake. Both are delicious, but the cake with watermelon is a hoot. It's like a Napoleon or Mille Feuille with thin crispy layers and thick, luxurious light, airy butter cream layers. And then... there's a thick layer of ripe watermelon. It is impossible to cut without making a mess, but it is tasty, as well as being a treat for the eyes.

Don meets us for our last location: Handpicked Wine. It is just a few blocks from our hotel. They have different flights of wine, so each of the eight of us had four glasses before us. Ergo, 32 glasses of wine at once. It all works out. The wines were mostly from Australia and most were pretty good and some were excellent. We get to know our Louisiana partners in food a little better, learning Dana and Marguerite are nurses which gets us on the subject of favorite medical TV shows. We talk about Max's The Pitt, which we love, very authentic, and Grey's Anatomy, with it's unrealistic amount of daily sex between the hospital staff.

Full and liquored up we say our goodbyes and headed back into Sydney on our own. The four of us are headed up to the city's version of the Seattle Space Needle, or the similar one in San Antonio, Dallas, or a bunch of other cities. We're on the 83rd floor and can look down on Sydney in every direction (if we walk around). There's a couple of floors of restaurant that slowly rotate, our bar floor doesn't. There are loads of totally dolled out young ladies intent on getting the perfect instagram picture, with Sydney below in the background. We're a tad under-dressed but have fun and enjoy our cocktails.

After witnessing sunset from on high we head over to the pedestrian bridge that puts us in the middle of Darling Harbor. We were promised fireworks at 8 pm, but when they fail to materialize we ask ChatGPT what's up. We learn they DO have weekly fireworks in the height of summer (around Christmas) for two months, but now in the shoulder season, they're less frequent. Today's not one of those days.

Our consolation prize is a lovely evening walk back to our hotel. No dinner needed tonight, we'll be digesting our day's worth of eating for a while.

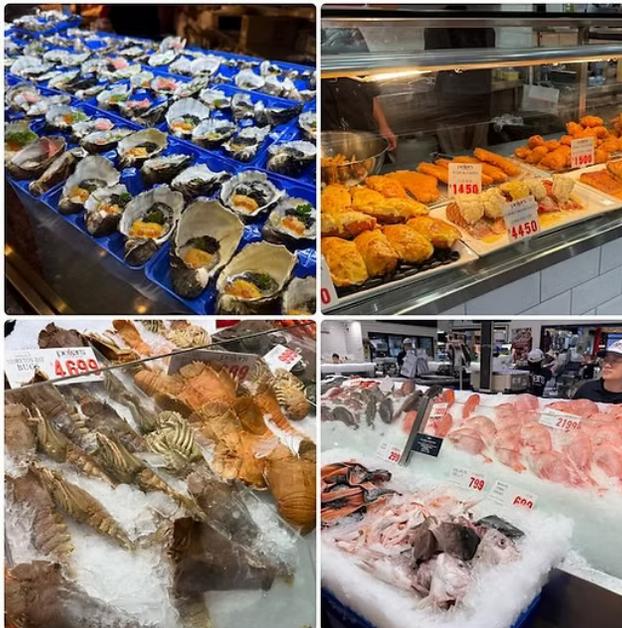
Photos



We work out at our hotel hoping to offset some of the impending badness of our upcoming foodie tour.



Helen explains to us how the Sydney Fish Market wholesale operation works.



On the retail side, there's so much variety and quantity, raw and prepared both



We were prepared for our first taste of the day and it doesn't disappoint. So much fish and seafood, and all delicious.



Tricia and Karen needed a little something sweet after that, so they did a quick gelato stop on the side.



Helen explains to us the marvel that is the Barangaroo, on the edge of the Darling Harbor. So much development, much done, some still coming. Great for business and also for tourism.



At Lotus, the star: the fried calamari. Tender and flavorful.



Harry's venerable Café de Wheels (sans wheels).



There's a picture of Harry between Karen and myself. The other pictures are some of the famous people who have stopped by for one of Harry's famous meat pies.



Karen doing her best Vanna White, showing off our meat pie, with bright green mushy peas on top.



A very well attended street fair in one of the many fun neighborhoods of Sydney.



Strawberry and watermelon cake. What a concept! Black Star Pastry has it down to an art. Delicious.



Eight people and thirty-two wine glasses, what could possibly go wrong? We finished most all and get better acquainted in the process.



Back outside, we look up at the Sydney Eye where we'll be going next. Eight-third floor, please.



FARNSNIENTE

Tricia and Don contemplating their first move from the cocktail menu.



The view from the 83rd floor, looking down on Woolloomooloo, the current permanent "parking spot" for Harry's Café de Wheels (among others).





Scott and Karen with more alcohol, just what we don't need, but there's a two drink minimum, per person. We have to support the local economy, right?



The sunset was some pretty colors.



"Mr. DeMille, we're ready for our fireworks." They never showed. Come back next Saturday.

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