

Post



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# The ultimate treehouse - April 17, 2025

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## ***SUMMARY***

On a private tour we headed off to the Barossa Valley, a beautiful, famous wine region outside of Adelaide. We made a few stops, first to the “Whispering Wall”, a dam with extraordinary acoustics. Then to Maggie Beer’s Farm Stand (she’s like the Australian Martha Stewart) for “elevenses”. We had a yummy lunch of charcuterie and pizza and a tasting of multiple wines at Lambert Estate winery. Afterwards, we headed to the Adelaide Hills for a chance to shop at Melba’s Chocolates and Woodside Cheese Wrights (meh). From there were driven to Hahndorf, a lovely little German settlement from 1837 and given time to

stroll, shop and imbibe. We ended the tour with a stop at the Mt. Lofty summit for breathtaking views before being dropped off at Adelaide's Central (marvelous) Market. - Karen

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### ***DETAIL***

Another day, another tour. We walk the surprisingly long way to the hotel next door (around the city's central train station) over to the Intercontinental and sure enough there's Hayley, our guide. Also there is Robert, her husband. Robert had no plans for the day, so he offered to drive (even though he's not getting paid). He'll also give some of the color commentary as he's the wine expert, having worked in the wine industry. Robert looks and sounds a bit like Robin Leach, from the old TV show "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous". We buckle in and off we go.

We're off for a wine tasting today but confusingly our first stop seems to be something to do with beer. We're headed to Maggie Beer's place. She's a famous television personality who had her own cooking show on the telly, with that Simon Bryant bloke, don't cha' know. We don't know, but OK. Actually she's also been a guest on some American cooking shows, so yeah, maybe we have heard of her.

First, though, is a fairly long drive. En route we hear about Adelaide, including that we're driving along Port Road, which leads, not surprisingly, to the port. Back in the day this wide area between the two directions of traffic was a canal, to help shuttle goods to and from town. It's been closed up, mostly, though there's a section down towards the water, we're told.

On the drive we learn about our two hosts. She was born here but he was brought over here as a young lad by his parents back in '62 from Birmingham, England. Australia, back then, needed skilled labor and Robert's dad fit the bill. They were called "Ten Pounders". For 10 pounds sterling (~US\$360 in today's money) you get transportation for you and your family and some help getting set up in your new home.

On the highway we see some long semi-trailer trucks. One has 12 axels between the cab and the two trailers it's pulling. We hear that these trucks can have up to four trailers, one after the next. They're called road trains. We find a picture of a long one and they look quite intimidating!

Our first stop is at a dam. On the road into the dam itself we drive underneath huge, spreading gum trees (eucalyptus). They're called widow-makers, we're told. These trees have huge limbs, and when there's not enough rain, to lower the water needs of the tree they just drops a big branch to the ground. If you're underneath it at the time your spouse is now a widow.

The dam was completed in 1902. It looks the Hoover Dam, one smooth curve of cement from one side of a valley over to the other, all the way up. Apparently back then there would be grumblings by the workers about pay or treatment or such. The workers plan action but then the instigators are fired. How did the supervisors know? Well, due to the hard cement, and the perfectly curved shape, any sound at one end, even at a whisper, can be heard at the other. There are now paths and instructions on where to stand to experience it for yourself. Karen and I try it and it's true! Hence the dam's name: "The Whispering Wall Dam".

Driving on, we talk more about Adelaide. Apparently one of its nicknames is "The City of Churches". We do see a big cathedral from our balcony. Apparently back in the day there were a lot of workers and they needed supplies, etc. Part of the 'etc.' are the brothels that would invariably pop-up. Begin good God-fearing people a church was invariably built next door. The brothel didn't like that of course, so they'd move. Next to the brothel's new location... a church would pop-up. And repeat and repeat. Some of the churches are still in that business but others have been turned into bookstores, restaurants, bars, etc. (well, not THAT 'etc.')

At Maggie Beer's place we order coffee and enjoy it under the trees outside. The big draw of coming here, besides the food and cool shop, is the actual kitchen/set where the TV show ("The Cook and the Chef") was filmed. They also have families of pheasants, peacocks and other exotic birds.

Lambert's Winery, in the Barossa Valley, is our next stop. The Lamberts, and their son, are from Wisconsin, and their daughter-in-law, is from Peru. After he trained to make wine (in Adelaide where they met) they got married and couldn't choose between going back to the US or Peru, so they decide to stay here in Adelaide. Norway is in the mix there, too, and there are flags for all these places fluttering in the breeze. The senior Lamberts now also have a house just outside of Austin, maybe 20 minutes from where we live. The wine is very good, and the lunch is excellent. We chit-chat with both of the Lamberts and find we have much in common (other than us not owning a nice winery nor houses on multiple continents).

As we drive on, Robert slows the van to a crawl. He spotted a kangaroo mum and her small joey, relaxing in the shade between two rows of Lambert grape vines. Driving on we are slack-jawed by a most amazing tree, the Herbig Tree. It's in Springton, Barossa Valley, if you want to Google it. For many years the Herbig family made this tree their home. They had two kids there. Mrs. Herbig finally put her foot down, saying "no more kids until they move into a proper home... this tree is just too damn cramped!" We can see how that's be the case. Mr. H eventually caved and they moved into a more normal house. Their ultimate offspring count was 16. Good thing they moved into a bigger tree, er, house.

In Hahndorf we stop to walk and check out the many touristy shops (and enjoy a good German beer). In 1835 the Prussian government said everyone had to change to the state religion or leave the country. 135 of them didn't care for that and decided to come here instead. They were given acreage and loaned some grain, feed, and livestock. They had one year to decide if they wanted to stay or go home. They obviously stayed and were industrious and successful. In a short seven years they had their debts paid off. The elders, way back when, planted all the trees lining both sides of the main (only?) street in the town and we're walking in their shade today.

Back in the van we head to Mount Lofty, overlooking Adelaide. On the way we mention yesterday was Ash Wednesday, and Easter is coming and how will business closings impact our stay. How do we know about Ash Wednesday?? We were thinking of the religious observance and they thought we meant that terrible bush fires that started on a Wednesday back in 1983. It quickly destroyed more than 300 homes and killed 28 people, including three volunteer fire fighters. They call it Ash Wednesday. We don't have the heart to tell them that name's been taken.

They drop us at the Adelaide Central Market, an old, wonderful indoor big food market with lots of stalls. There's oodles of prepared foods and raw ingredients (fish, meat, produce, chocolate, pasta, flour, spices). It's enormous and a beloved landmark of the city, with good cause. If you've been to the one in Barcelona, just off Las Ramblas, it looks very similar to that one. Everything looks delicious and we wish we had a proper kitchen and refrigerator to do some cooking.

Since we don't, we walk to a great Indian place to eat: the Jasmin Indian Restaurant. It's downstairs and we have a lot of fun there. We would have liked for the food to be spicier, but live and learn. Good full day and we walk back to our hotel down a very long, very wide pedestrian boulevard lined with quite a few amazing 1800's era buildings with very dated facades but restored to Disney-like perfection.

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## Photos



Sunrise alpenglow from our balcony.  
Looking towards the Indian Ocean.



Three couples in our tour van. Couple's  
Therapy?



We didn't see a road train this long, but man, what could possibly go wrong? It gets hot here and those vehicles, understandably, are heavy. Where we were driving the road was made of concrete, not asphalt. Melts and deforms less in the heat, don't-cha-know.



With Don and Robert on this side of the Whispering Wall Dam. In the picture (upper left) are Karen, Tricia and Hayley). Just below where Robert's standing is the 'send and receive' whispering point for this side of the dam.



Fans of 80 year old Maggie Beer, getting a picture taken behind the stove on the set where beloved Maggie's famous cooking show was filmed.



Another way to encourage tourism to the Barossa Valley wine region: an annual scarecrow competition. Not sure if this one won, but wouldn't be surprised. Picnic in a boat on the 'lake'.



Robert departing interesting knowledge, as always, this time about the exotic birds raised here on Maggie's farm.





Mom and joey between rows of grapes, enjoying the shade and (until we drove up) peace and quiet.



A home for 12, back in the 1800s, until mum put her foot down and said 'no more children unless we move into a proper house'. They did and had another dozen kids. Whew!



Melba's Chocolate shop. It's almost Easter so sweet confections are on the minds of all good Australian kids plus thoughts of the Easter Bunny, er, Bilby, here... (look it up.)



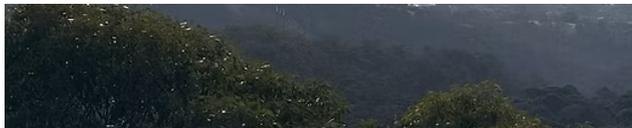
Just the two of us (plus a gazillion other tourists) in the town of Hahndorf, population 2,300.



A well preserved farm house, from way back in the day.



FARNSNIENTE 



The hazy late afternoon view from Mount Lofty, looking towards the CBD (Central Business District) where we're staying, with the Indian Ocean off in the distance.



Every kilometer or so were changeable speed signs. When there's work or a crash they change to slow you to 40kph and then 25kph. Everyone complies. Very civil in this nanny state. The locals know there are lots of rules, but like the quality of life it affords (at least the ones with whom we've jawboned).



Not Austin's Central Market but a very cool, fun one, nonetheless. We liked this little table, held up (visually) by an old bicycle.



After a wonderful dinner at Jasmin Indian Restaurant.



On the walk home. Behind Don are the Mall Balls, a 'famous' sculpture'.

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