

# "Down Under" Family Reunion

By Larry Hayes



**It had been six years since our last trip to Australia to visit my wife's sister in Sydney and her two brothers in Melbourne.**

We were hesitant to make the exhausting 14-hour flight again due to having been there six times and seeing most of the country including Darwin, Alice Springs, Cairns and the Gold Coast.

Several things motivated us to go again. Our daughter Charm was going to Sydney on a business trip and she wanted us to come along. Our son-in-law Tim was also going,

Another big motivation was to provide support to my wife's sister whose husband is on kidney dialysis three days a week. The treatment is grueling not only for the patient but for the caregiver as well.

A third reason, and equally important, was to reconnect our daughter with her cousins of similar age in Australia since my wife's family lives there having immigrated from India 35 years ago.

## **WHY THIS TRIP WAS SPECIAL**

Our first week was spent in Sydney spending time with my wife's sister

and husband, and their son Robin and family. They live in the suburbs close to a ferry service so we commuted to downtown Sydney by boat. What a spectacular sight! I envy commuters riding the ferry from Marin and Oakland in the Bay Area. It's a relaxing, beautiful way to commute to work.

We did the usual tourist things in Sydney—taking the "City by Bus" tour, visiting the Opera House, St. Mary's Cathedral, Darling Harbour and Bondi beach. However, the best time was spent with my wife's family. Staying at their homes, eating meals



together, sharing stories and catching up with life. Charm and Robin have a special relationship and it was great seeing them get along so well.

After a grand time in Sydney, we flew to Melbourne for a week with Gloria's two brothers and their families. In the past, we've taken vacations all over the world with her brother Trevor and his wife Dolly who is like a sister to my wife Gloria. Her brother Trevor is my favorite fishing buddy.



Charm with cousins Shane (Left) and Robin

We stayed with Trevor and Dolly while Charm and Tim stayed with their son Shane and his family. Bonding this time with cousin Shane.

One of the highlights in Melbourne was booking a tour of the Great Ocean Road, one of the world's most scenic coastal drives. Although we've visited Melbourne many times, we had never taken this trip. Stops along the way included iconic beaches, lush rainforests and the famous 12 Apostles ocean rock formations. "Must see" even in 100 F heat.

There are many wonderful things to do and see in Australia but the main event for us was the "Family Reunion" held at Trevor's home. 40 relatives showed up—young and oldies like us. My wife's sister, husband plus Robin and his family flew down from Sydney to celebrate with us.

It was a very special, fun time seeing and connecting again with Gloria's close knit family. Well worth the "no sleep," 14-hour plane ride!

## TAKE AWAYS

- Australia is expensive. Everything is approximately 30% more than the U.S. However, the U.S dollar is worth 30% more than the Australian dollar—making it a wash cost wise.
- If you love California, you'll love Australia. Sydney is often compared to San Francisco. Australians are pro American and very friendly. And speak English—with Australian slang!
- Sydney and Melbourne are "bucket list" destinations but my favorite places are Darwin, Ayers Rock and Cairns (the Great Barrier Reef.)
- Favorite Indian restaurant in Sydney—Aki's on the waterfront.
- Australians love their beaches, beer and a good time. Just like Americans.