

**Australian Outback Marathon
with Sydney Trip Notes and Tom to Hong Kong
July 23 – August 8, 2012**

The trip as advertised: Located in the very heart of the country, this truly unique event will have the majestic Ayers Rock as its backdrop and will give runners of all levels the opportunity to experience the Australian Outback as its earliest inhabitants once did, on foot.

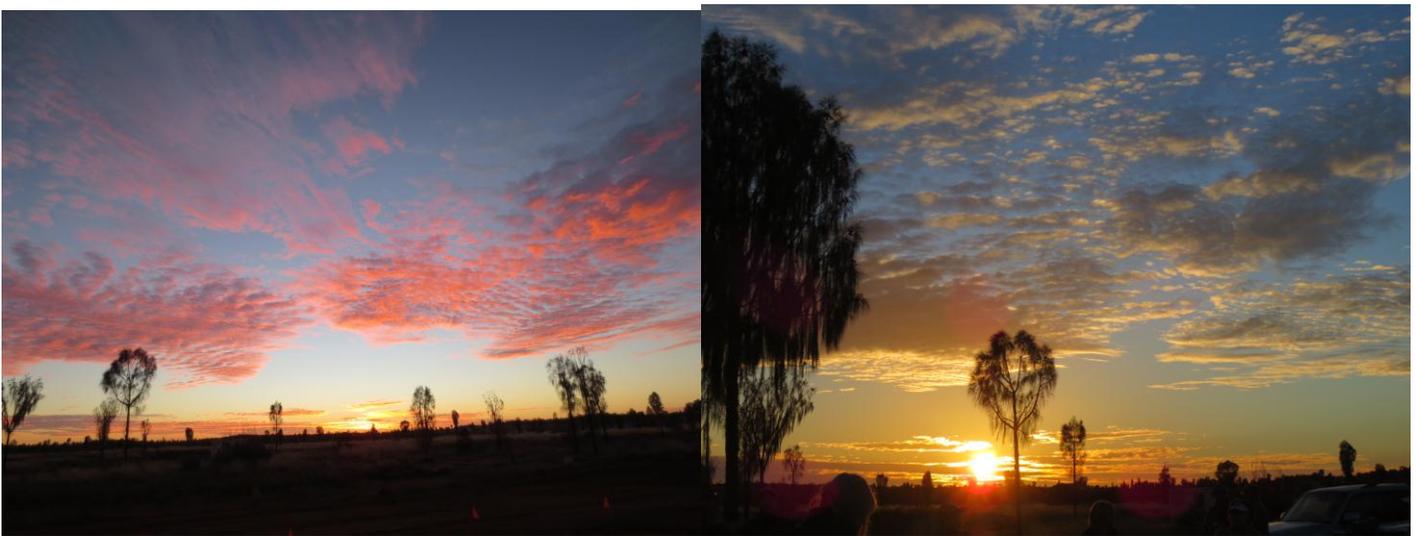
***Don't worry about the world coming to an end. It's already tomorrow in Australia.
Found on a Chinese fortune cookie as we were leaving the U.S.***

It was a very long ways to go for a marathon. Was it worth it? Now that the 14 hours of time difference and 24 hours of flying time are done, yes. Would I recommend it? Definitely yes, if you need a headline. Would I recommend other marathons first? Yes, Albuquerque which is near to Acoma, or Red Rock Canyon outside of Las Vegas if it's a big rock you want to run around.

Upsides to making the trip for a marathon

- Beautiful and unique scenery in the resort area and on the marathon course. The famous Uluru or Ayers Rock was forever in our sights.
- First rate organization with no expense spared and no want left uncovered: gloriously rich pasta dinner, course arrangements, t-shirt and medal as well as a backpack.
- Ayres Rock Resort and especially their Sails in the Desert hotel is first rate and exceptionally special.
- Multiple tours are available making a 4-5 day stay enjoyable.
- It's a big headline going to run around Uluru Ayers Rock.
- The sunrise at the starting line was the best of the trip.
- Where else can you run that has had continuous civilization for over 40,000 years.
- Potential of it being my 100th marathon existed (had I not been able to finish Stockholm the week earlier) and I wanted it to be BIG and somewhere no one felt obliged to attend.
- Finish line is very exciting with loud music, an announcer, and generous food to include sandwiches, fruit and coffee.
- The event supports the Aborigines. There was a group of young students from Darwin area who had never even seen a road before but came to run.





Changing sunrise at the start line

Downsides – though not to take away from the event

- Remote, difficult and expensive to get to. It's about 3 ½ hour flight from Sydney. Sydney is 24 hours flying time from the east coast.
- Sand is most of the course and it's deep and heavy – though it has been hard packed when they weren't in a drought. Imagine sand over your shoe tops and trying to climb a hill?
- Start and finish require busing.
- Captive to the remoteness and heavy pricing of the resort.
- Weather can be very hot or very cold. It can be windy. We started at 0-degrees C and had wind gusts to 45kph. We had expected and brought clothing for heat and thus had to layer on shirts.
- No food on the course at all – to save on trash pick-up.
- Running alone most of the time can be a meditation in motion. Or it can be an event where you wish you had an emergency whistle in case a pack of wild dingos starts chasing you. I was alone for most of the marathon after about 5 miles but I never saw a dingo and only saw the wild camel droppings.

My 100th marathon?

I could play this up as my 100th since Stockholm technically wasn't the full 42k. Smile. As a 100th anniversary replay of their historical Olympic event, marathons were only 40k then. So this was my 100th or my 101st? I'm just enjoying counting my 100th twice. I didn't tell people at either event but a couple folks at each event knew and also knew that I didn't want a big play about it. (Just when you think you're superwoman, along comes someone who did 600 and went around the world five times.)

Coincidentally, Judy had just met Deb at Vancouver where she did her 100th and the Outback was also her 101st. We came in together, that is for my second time coming to the finish line.

Results

Having started strong but feeling the results on my hips of the heavy and deep sand already by 5 miles, I slowed to a total walk for the rest of it and came in at 6:47. And why not? They offered us 8 hours so why not take it? This was the very toughest I've encountered for a very longtime and the sand was hugely more difficult than Surfside in Galveston. I'd had to stop and dump heaps of sand from each shoe repeatedly and I knew my orthotics were ruined and my feet looked permanently stained red, but I didn't realize there were humongous blisters covering the bottom of my feet. A week later and I was still walking gingerly and trimming off dead skin. This finish was about 1 ¼ hours longer than the week before in Stockholm!

My short email update sent immediately after the marathon

I was very frustrated at the expensive Wi-Fi (\$25 a day) which I just refuse to pay and thus my communications with Tom and friends were very limited.

Email to Tom and friends who were asking: Sorry to miss two calls from you. I'm in now and prob staying in so please try again. I'll stay out of shower hoping you are there and can call. But wow I need a shower! Yes my time zone is 1/2 hour earlier. This might have been one of the tougher marathons I've done. Deep sand and hills so after about 5 miles my hips and glutes begged me to walk it in. Since they give us 8 hours I was able to do so. I almost took it all coming in around 6:46. I should have guessed there was a reason for giving us 8 hours. I'm told they have been so long without rain that the sand is hugely deeper than usual. No I don't have email unless I get a card and pay up which I'm doing now for one continuous hour. Can't use computer since there will be so many emails to download that this will never send. After I was done with my marathon I went back about 3.5 kilometers (x 2 with return) to get Debra Ingram who came in at 8:15. Debra is Judy's new friend. She lives in Gainesville. I've never been so filthy with red dirt or so beat up with much of bottom of feet one big blister. Stopped often and each time dumped at least quarter cup of sand from each shoe. Orthotics will need a refurbishment. Maybe when I hook into email I'll see what Tom is doing in Sydney. (Little did I know!) I'm in for evening because it'll take me forever to clean me and these clothes. Some of which I need for my 4am departure to Kings Canyon. It's been literally freezing in morning so I need all the shirts I can wear! (Turned out to be a 3 ½ hour hike.) While I'm sorry to miss tonight's dinner and dancing it's not logical. Did dance a couple songs at finish line which was about as foolish as going out for Debra. If you sent emails I will likely be able to answer on Tuesday. The apartment Tom says is great and even better it has Wi-Fi.

Stats: 127 full marathon finishers with about 310 total participants in the 5k, 11k, half and full combined. One man was timed up to 9 hours.

Weather

I was dressed entirely inappropriately in both Ayers and in Sydney. In both places I wore layers and even bought a big thick wool scarf in Sydney. I knew it was their winter but there had not been predictions of freezing temperatures and that's what we had most mornings in Ayers. Throughout the marathon I had on three shirts and one light jacket and gloves half the time with a Buff around my head and one around my neck. What's with this weather? I almost expected 'hail' though they'd maybe never had hail in their history but after all I'd had hail in Stockholm which never happens and hail at Lake George which never happens.

Marathon scenes



Tom picked these pictures off Google Earth and sent them around with the question: Can you imagine doing a marathon in a place like this? And – Ever wonder what Ayers Rock looks like?

Camels – wild camels

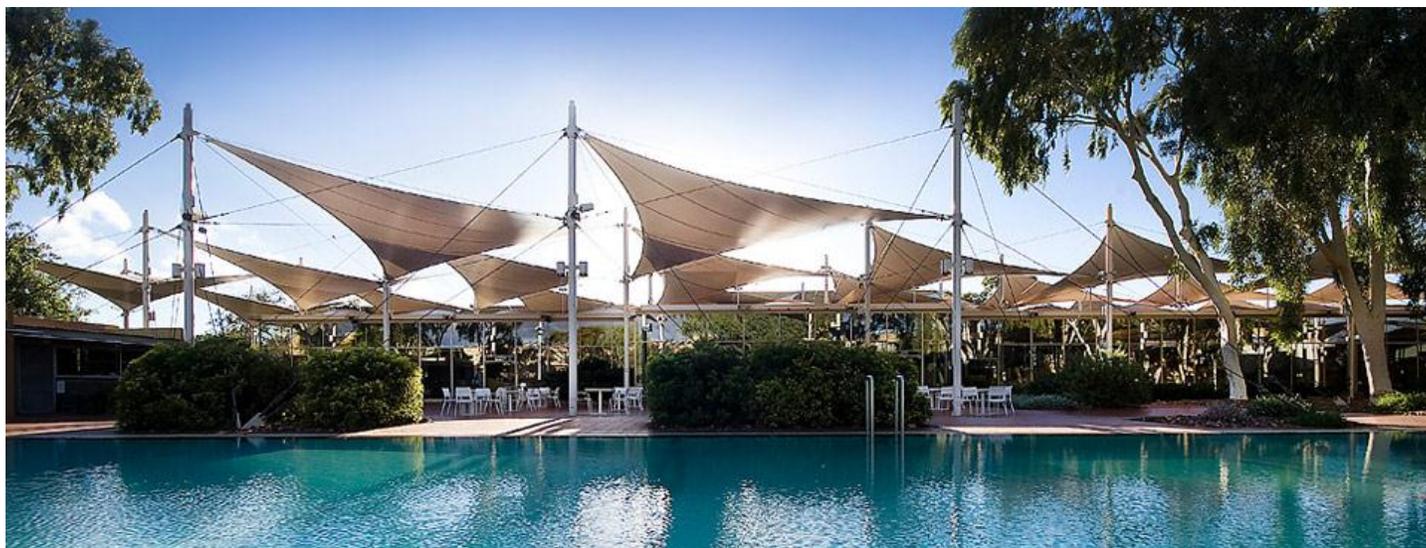
I saw the droppings and then I heard the story. I kept looking but only saw live camels in the farm and off in the distance from the bus. Amazingly, over one million camels live in this desert. They are pests – they demolish air conditioners, fences and plumbing and foul critical watering holes as well as eating the roots of plants sacred to the Aborigines. They were brought in during the 19th century to work on building railroad tracks and roads. The contractors vowed to dispose of them after their use but they were let loose, creating the world's only population of wild camels and major pests. Since then their population has doubled every eight or nine years. They adapt too well to the desert.

The camels can chug more than 50 gallons of water in three minutes which leads to problems. When large numbers converge on a waterhole, the first animals get mired in the holes and die, fouling the water and destroying the waterhole completely and these waterholes are critical resources for humans and native birds and animals. Last year 3000 camels descended on one Aboriginal community during a period of drought. New efforts have the camels used for tourist rides as well as for commercial consumption by people or pets. Recently they are being rounded up and shipped to places like Saudi Arabia where they need new breeding stock.

Sails in the Desert at Ayers Rock Resort

All racing registrations (there were various distances offered) required the reservation at one of four hotels that are part of the Ayers Rock Resort: Sails in the Desert, Gardens, Pioneer or the camp grounds near to Pioneer. The main functions were at Sails but Gardens was quite close with a small village in between the two. It was a shuttle bus or a bit of a hike over to Pioneer.

From a business standpoint I suspect that Ayers Rock Resort was a major sponsor and/or initiator of this running festival as it's off season and the event pretty much filled up the place as well as selling multiple days guided tours.



From their website: Named after the soaring white sails that crown its roof, this is Voyages Ayers Rock Resort's premium hotel. The interior decor focuses on Aboriginal heritage and culture, with a gallery in the lobby and significant artworks featured throughout the public areas and in the private rooms. Slip into comfort right in the heart of the central Australian outback at Voyages Sails in the Desert Hotel. Relax in beautifully appointed rooms, enjoy a cocktail in the lovely grounds, or sit back and relax under the magnificent white sails. The Hotel also features the acclaimed Mulgara Gallery, the lively, buffet-style Winkiku Restaurant, tapas-style cuisine by the pool at Rockpool (seasonal), and the award winning signature restaurant of Voyages Ayers Rock Resort, Kuniya Restaurant.

Sunrise tour with hike around Uluru Ayers Rock with Cultural Center visit

The hike to go fully around was about 10k and I didn't do it all. At the cultural center we had a series of movies and TV clips about the aborigines and then a live interview with one of the elders who was being translated by a young park ranger. The sacredness of the land was the main headline.

Many places had requests not to photograph and I was quite incensed at the number of people who did. During the cultural dancing at the village I'd guess about half of the spectators were taking pictures. It was tempting as much because of the inter-mixture of the culture, but I did NOT. Here are women dancers with huge long painted breasts hanging down past their waist, but under was tied a GAP type striped t-shirt, and they were wearing very non-Aborigine skirts. I did take a picture of their dingo-dogs.

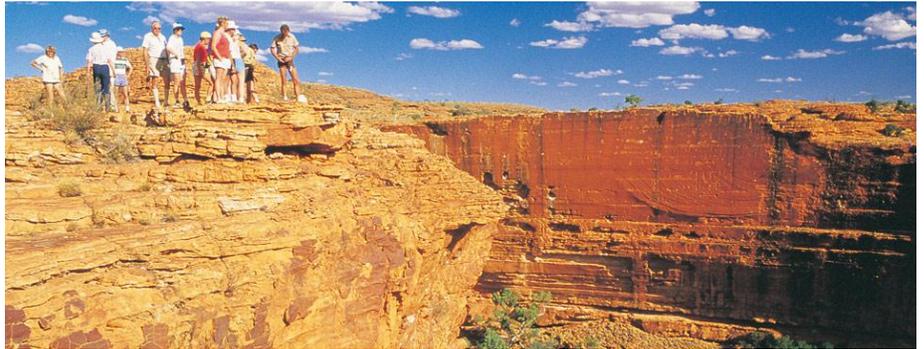
From website: *Experience the tranquility of the pre-dawn land under a canopy of stars. Then watch the amazing transformation of colors and life as the desert awakens with Uluru and Kata Tjuta as your backdrop. Travel away from the crowds to a secluded sand dune to watch the spectacular sight of sunrise over Uluru and Kata Tjuta. Desert Awakenings is designed to introduce you to the natural and cultural landscapes of this remarkable region.*



Cultural Centre and Uluru: Depart for Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and the first stop is Kuniya where you'll take a short walk to the Mutitjulu water-hole. A visit here will help appreciate its cathedral like proportions and why it is such a powerful and spiritual place for visitors and Anangu alike. A guide will explain some of the rock paintings and some of the stories from the creation period as told by the Anangu people. Next stop is the Cultural Centre, a vibrant and engaging place of learning where the local lore of the Anangu (Aboriginal people) is explained in detail. Desert Awakenings is a much sought after experience that delivers insight into the ancient landscape, ecology, culture, heritage, and history of what is now regarded as Australia's spiritual heartland.

Kings Canyon hike the day after the marathon

Oh gee, who in their right mind would sign up for a hiking tour that starts at 4am the day after the marathon? Additionally I hadn't realized it would include a 3 ½ hour hike. The canyon is larger than America's Grand Canyon and full of some unique sights.



As we started our ascent of the first high mountain it didn't take many steps until I felt a warm wash of liquid on my feet. It was a mass of solid blisters covering the bottom of my feet that finally opened. I hadn't had a blister since one of my very first marathons at which point in time I got orthotics and thought blisters were only for others.

Aborigine sacred grounds

I was very upset and embarrassed for all the people who didn't honor the aborigine's sacred grounds. There are areas, like the women's birthing area at Uluru, where they ask NOT to take pictures and folks were doing it anyway. During a show of their native dances in the resort's village when we were asked to honor their culture and not photo or film, I'd guess half the folks were filming. You will not be surprised that I never did. Even climbing their rock that I'd have loved to do, I just couldn't when they asked us not to. It was tempting because here's these huge Aborigines with painted breasts hanging down past their waist and yet decked out with a modern striped t-shirt tied under their breasts. I had a situation in the botanical gardens when I challenged a couple young guys -- I told them they were cute but not very smart to be climbing on the culturally significant mounds when they were asked not to. They claimed they couldn't read. I should have said that I wasn't surprised they couldn't read. Illiterate and thoughtless. No one likes to photograph more than me but NO WAY. No one likes to climb more than me but NO WAY.

Sounds of Silence Dinner

This was billed as a highlight and it didn't let us down. To add to the delight, some Australians I'd met saved me a spot at their table full of Australians and the entire evening as a laugh a minute. We had left from the hotel at 4:40pm until didn't return



until after 10:30pm so it was a BIG event in more ways than one. How they manage to pull off such a luxurious dinner out in the Outback is amazing.

From their website: *At the Sounds of Silence experience you can dine under the canopy of the desert night, while your very own storyteller shares tales as told in the stars. Entered into the Australian Tourism Hall of Fame, Sounds of Silence offers the best of the Red Centre distilled into four magical hours. An evening of dining under the sparkling outback sky. Includes Sunset canapés. Your journey begins on a lone sand dune. A path takes you to an uninterrupted, three hundred and sixty degree view of this vast landscape. In front of you is the fabled Uluru; behind you are the domes of Kata Tjuta and, possibly the most spectacular sunset you have ever seen. Here you enjoy sparkling wine and a selection of delectable canapés. Includes dining under the sparkling outback sky. As the sun sets, you feast on a BBQ buffet of authentic Australian delicacies examples include barramundi, kangaroo and crocodile, bush salads and classic desserts, complemented by Australian wines. Includes stargazing. Attention then turns to some of the world's best stargazing, as our star-talker takes you on a tour of the spectacular southern night sky. As you wind down after dinner, you are offered a choice of tea, coffee or port. The Sounds of Silence experience includes: Canapés, Beer, wine, champagne and non-alcoholic drinks; Buffet BBQ; Scrumptious desserts; Tea, coffee and port; Entertainment; Star talk and stargazing.*

New friends

The level of bonding on this trip was more frequent and more special than usual. I met new folks that I'd make a large effort to see again. I'd wondered if the friendliness of the Australians made us all more open. They were unusually warm and inviting and it reminded me of my trip earlier this month: did anyone meet a Swede friend? I bet not. When Tom and I visited Australia in the 70s we were really turned off by how rough and tough they were and especially the women despite their seeming to have NO rights. (They'd stand outside the bars waiting for their men-folks.) Now Australia is infested with just the opposite – tiny little Asians who run into you in the streets since they are en-masse. BTW, trash on the course came from Japanese. Late arrivals on the bus were Japanese.

1st friend: Tracy was my seat mate from San Francisco to Sydney by way of the unanticipated Brisbane stop, and then it must have been meant to be for we found each other on a Sydney street corner that next evening. I was on my way to Ayers and she was on her way to Darwin to begin a three week sail. The other coincidence is that I'll be able to see her in San Francisco while I'm at the October Point Reyes hike.

Forever and often friends: Richard, Trudy and Jared were at Ayers to run the 11k and the half. We kept running into each other until I was afraid they thought I was stalking them. I loved them anyway but after coming home and receiving this email, you'll see how irresistible they are! Especially since turning 67 on this trip made me feel especially old for the first time ever. They live in Melbourne

which incentivizes me to consider a trip there if we can't meet up in the U.S. A super smart family with Trudy holding down a top level government job and Richard with no reluctance to take care of the home and family on top of his 9-5'er. Young teen Jared is a smart and good looking kid showing the signs of excellent parenting. Treasures for sure. The family that runs together, stays together!

"We showed Trudy running buddies some of the photos from the run. There are now a number of guys that want to go running with/after the middle aged woman with the lady liberty thing on her head. Enjoy the rest of your stay in oz and hopefully we will see you back here soon. Love, Richard, Trudy and Jared"



Sue and Andrew O'Brien were Australian and they'd written "Partner Running: 8 marathons, 8 weeks, 8 countries" and they were equally warm and comforting throughout the trip. Andrew was out on the course bringing in everyone.

Jeff and Susan are from Indianapolis and seem to be a new relationship with Susan deciding she needed to run if she was going to travel so she does half marathons whereas Jeff does the full. They are completing their 7 Continent quests this next year in Antarctica.



Sydney as a tourist

I'd come in a day early and joined up with Marathon Tours to travel with them to Uluru the following day (their tour had begun with 2 full days in Sydney that I missed and then they continued onto the Barrier Reef which I didn't care to see again. Surprisingly I met some of them in the airport on the way home and they generally said the Barrier Reef and Port Douglas was a disappointment.) It was a good thing I hadn't signed up for their day's tour when I arrived since we were unable to land at 6:25am and instead had to go to Brisbane for fueling and wait for Sydney's weather to clear. Then we circled around Sydney long enough we were fearful of having to land somewhere else again but we did eventually land by noon.

I refreshed my memory of Sydney though there was not much other than the Harbor remaining as it was from our trip to Australia in the 70s. The Opera House had just opened and the big sky rise then was the now smallish Sheraton Hotel. I walked miles and by evening ran into a new friend I'd met on the plane. We had planned to meet up again in San Francisco in October and little did we expect to find each other on Sydney's street corner so soon. Tracy was on her way to Darwin to begin a three week cruise.

Tom started this trip!

Forever ago Tom had declared he wanted to see Sydney again. We'd had a month in Australia in the 70s when we'd only gotten so far as Brisbane, Mackay and Cairns as well as the Great Barrier Reef. We'd come with money in our pocket then thinking we'd buy some beach property for retirement but we got over that in a hurry. Not only was beach property held by the crown, but the Australians in those days were pretty Outback. Women were big and horsey and we found they had to stand outside the bars waiting for their men folks. Nice restaurants were made less nice by noisy Australians. They retain their boisterousness and we can only guess they don't hear well. Women are probably pretty liberated now and we understand those in Sydney are obsessed with health and staying thin. But in those days we didn't think raising a teenager in Australia would be a reasonable idea.

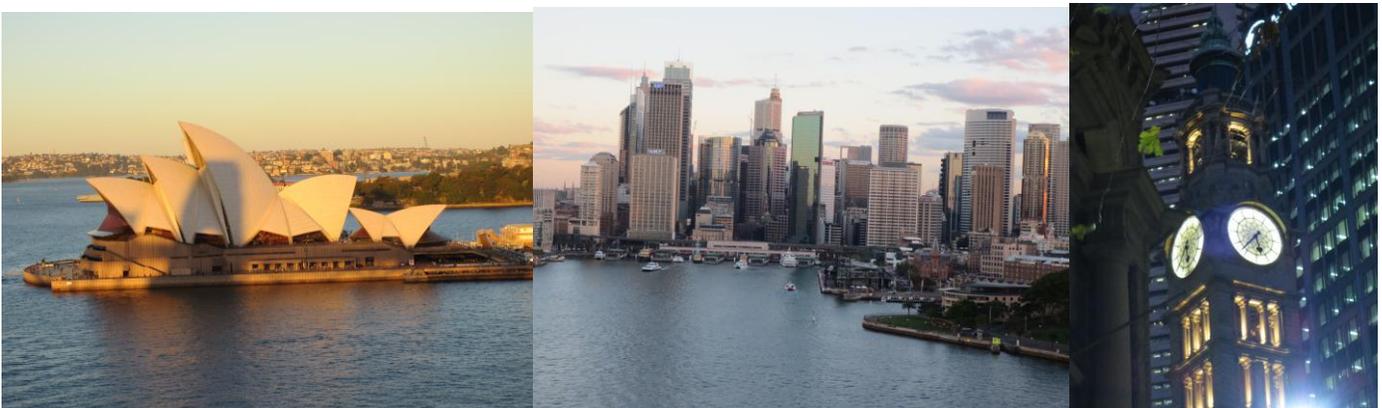
Tom started the hunt for an apartment in Sydney and I looked at the Sydney marathon. But one was too expensive or already booked and the other had a short cut off time so Tom gave up the idea of going. At one point he even had a ticket. Somewhere along the way the apartment he'd wanted became available but that was after I'd signed up for the Outback Marathon.

The solution was that I'd leave on Monday (arriving on Wednesday) and go onto the Outback (on Thursday through Monday) and Tom would follow by arriving on Friday. He'd have the apartment on his own until I arrived late Monday.

I'll add a few of my pictures of Sydney but send you to Tom's photo show to cover most of our Sydney trip. www.TomsKoi.com and click on photo shows.



Opera House from the water and later we would take a guided tour. This Aborigine had great abs.



Opera House from the far side of the Harbor Bridge then the city from the bridge, before I got lost downtown in the dark. Some of my best adventures have been when I was lost . . . heard that before?

The mini disaster

Little did I know that during Tom's flight to Sydney that he'd suffer some kind of bladder blockage and have a miserable time. The airlines wanted to have an ambulance meet him but he insisted on taking a taxi to the hospital emergency room where they fixed him up with a catheter. Despite a number of tests, as of 13 days later we don't know why the blockage but the doctors thought it okay that Tom continue on with his vacation so long as he was comfortable with his new 'equipment' which was an extra challenge.

Here is Tom's email explaining his medical emergency to me. He never sent this email and I only learned after having a good ole footloose and fancy free time at Ayers Rock. I understand why he didn't tell me but I'm not so sure I agree. In his defense, he did tell me to return home from the airport about five weeks prior when my presence was needed and helpful.

It's sort of hard to know where to start so maybe from the beginning. Wonderful stop at the first first lounge in SFO. Only two other people in the place. Had a little snack and a drink then walked a couple of steps next door and got on the plane. Super accommodation with very good service. About 4 or 5 hours into the flight I started having trouble urinating - only a few drops. And I was very well hydrated so that wasn't it. Anyway, I spent the next 8-10 hours in a bit of pain, got off the plane and since there was a very long line to get out I went to the crew exit and explained to the guy how I was very sick and needed to get to a hospital. He stamped my passport and I caught a taxi to Saint Vincent's (the hostess had suggested there). They took me right in and installed a catheter into my bladder and extracted a whole LITER of urine. No wonder I was so uncomfortable. What a relief!! The last time I had peed normally was at the lounge in SF. Anyway, the catheter is still in and there's a bag I strap to my leg for the flow. I can walk and do most stuff without undue pain but it takes a bit of getting used to. I went to the local super market this morning and got the usual supplies and that went fine but I've been a little leery of going too far afield. Fortunately I have plenty of scotch (2 liters at duty free in SF) and a very comfortable bed so I've caught up on jet lag and have had a little to eat. Not much appetite. So sorry to bring such bad news. Please don't change or try to change any of your plans. There is absolutely nothing you can do for me and I'd feel terribly guilty. The view from here is truly spectacular and the apartment is as it should be and I sure look forward to seeing you on Monday.

It was hard to imagine Tom not only handling this new challenge but wanting to continue his trip onto Hong Kong. After a week I was to go home to NJ and he was to go onto Hong Kong. (Yes, I was as jealous as could be but I'd booked a hiking trip to the Beartooths in Montana and thus couldn't add the trip to the schedule.

Touring continued unabated

Though we might have gone slower and we might have made more stops along the way, we had plenty of touring in Sydney. It's sometimes interesting to me how I can go 27/7 trying to see everything when I'm touring alone, yet how I can stop and have long cocktail hours and easier touring when I'm with Tom, and how I enjoy both extremes.

From Tom to Ellen: The walk through the Chinese Garden was very nice but if Portland is a 10, this is a 5. Sitting in the sun in the tea house/little cafe next to the pond with koi and ducks (and very smart beautiful pesky birds trying to steal bites off the plates) was very pleasant. Then a walk by the convention hall with a major boat show going on with the little harbor in front loaded with yachts and major pleasure boats, powered and sail made for a neat afternoon. Then we went to the Strand Arcade (1890 shopping mall) and tried for a drink at a place Diana had enjoyed with a new found friend. Way too noisy (I'm convinced Australians are all very hard of hearing and therefore have to shout at each other - I'm serious!) Anyway we strolled to the other end and found a lovely quiet Italian restaurant and had our drink. I asked the maître d for a look at a menu and found a first course that could be had in two sizes and ordered this absolutely melt in your mouth lasagna - like nothing we've ever tasted before - house made pasta, pumpkin, and just marvelous. Wonderful stop. I suggested returning for dinner tomorrow, our last night together, but Diana says she'd rather not (and they were booked up anyway.)

What did we see?

The pressure was off and I didn't feel a need to touch every single tourist monument. Some I had before, some were new, some were silly and just there to spend gobs of money on so you could say you did it. I was more relaxed and wanting to enjoy the apartment, the neighborhood(s), the many neighborhood bays, the walks, and Tom. He was fortunately able to walk a lot, though slowly and with plenty of stops along the way.

The first day, alone, I probably saw the most. I even saw Brisbane but unintentionally and only from the air and from the tarmac. Then despite the alleged bad weather keeping us from landing, we had a perfectly fine view of the seaside, of which I did again when landing from Ayers Rock.

At my Grace Hotel in CBD (central business district) I found it was run by a flock of little Japanese who scurried all around like ants but got little done. Then on the streets there were multitude of these flocks. They might be little but I was often nearly knocked down! In the 70s we were run over by rough and tough Australian women. Now we're run over by little Japanese tourists pressing hard to spend the most money they can. They all seemed to be carrying bags and bags of famous designer merchandise. I quickly learned to take to the other side of the sidewalk too.

I found the Apple store who kindly give us free Wi-Fi without even signing in. Then walked on through the CBD shops, some underground at Martin Square and onto the botanical gardens and to the docks and the Circular Quay. It was there I shopped food-stuff and there I caught a two hour ferry tour billed as a coffee/tea/desserts affair. That was a good way to get reacquainted with the best of Sydney – the Harbor. After was a walk through the Rocks and up and over the famous Harbor Bridge and to terra firma on the other side. This was sunset time which gave an excellent view of the Opera House in a glow. After getting pleasantly but totally lost in the Rocks I eventually found my way through the CBD again and was checking into email at the Apple store when by major coincidence Tracy arrived – my new friend from the airplane ride from San Francisco. We'd vowed to see each other again but had no idea it would happen so soon. Her airport hotel turned out to be the downtown one instead, so we continued on my review of famous shopping arcades and had a drink in the Strand Arcade, left from glorious days of the 1860s. I would go there again with Tom for drinks and a bit of dinner.

I found groceries and alcohol prices to be totally out of sight and knew that my buffet breakfast would be the majority of my calories for the day. At Ayers Rocks we were fed amazingly well both quality and quantity and it was all built into the tour package. All of which was especially good since I'm used to carrying food for eating every couple hours but you can't carry food into Australia.

When I returned to Sydney of course it was to the big surprise that Tom had quietly and secretly dealt with his medical emergency and at first hearing it I was resigned to limited to no touring but he surprised me again by keeping going.

We went out to Bondi Beach to walk the beach walk and eat at the noted "Fishmongers" for fish and chips. Via Hyde Park for the first of many times we would see Circular Quay again, and again, and again. The botanical gardens were often in view and the last day we spent more time in them going out to the point after walking through the Domain.

Our friends had suggested walks through Potts Point and our Victoria Street and we found the Kings Cross area where we lived all to be central to these neighborhoods. Walking the little streets with two story town homes decorated with New Orleans style iron works balconies was a treat, especially the pedestrian street called Forbes on the way to Woolloomooloo, home of many movie stars and on into Rushcutters Bay. There were numerous recommended neighborhood parks that we found and enjoyed, soaking in the needed sun so we'd stay warm. We'd followed some walking routes to see

the big and expensive homes as well, such as Boomerang facing Rushcutters Bay. We lucked out that they were planting a tree so the front gate was wide open.

And who said there weren't any Navy warships? There is a huge Navy base that we walked up to and around.

One day we took the ferry out to Manly but it was brutally cold and windy so we only got the flair of the beach and busy streets of the area. The seas out at the twin cliffs at The Heads were heavy and the surf high. That might have been after the walking tour of the Opera House which had only just opened on our stay in the 70s.

Chinatown, Paddy's market place, the old Capitol Theater and the Chinese Gardens was an afternoon treat to include tea, drinks and food sitting pond-side in the gardens before venturing into Darling Harbor and the naval museum of boats and even an ongoing boat show. There were two Tall Ships in dock. We walked over Pyrmont Bridge famous for being opened in 1902 and containing the first and oldest electrically swing bridge in the world. It is now used strictly for pedestrians going from Darling Harbor to CBD and is at the apex of the museums and aquarium and all the other tourist stuff.

The converted bank buildings and/or old markets made for wonderful shopping malls. Burberry's old bank building was almost tacky with its emphasis on marble pillars and writing desks, and the QVB (Queen Victoria Building) is said to be the most beautiful shopping mall in the world. But the old 1862 Strand Arcade gives it some competition and its home to their famous hat maker.

One day we were pure tourists and went up in the Sydney Tower also known as the Sydney Eye. Between seeing the harbors from the water, it's good to get an aerial view too. The price was dumb but the 360 degree walk around was good. Those wishing a headline could strap into a harness and walk around outside. A cute fact; it has a 35,000 gallon water tank on the top to use as a stabilizer in the wind.

There were cathedrals, churches, memorials, on and on, as after all this is Sydney and a tourist mecca, but a highlight was finding a small alleyway called Angel Place and dining under the public art display called Forgotten Songs or Birdsong. You might like to read about it at <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/cityart/special/ForgottenSongs.asp>

This lead was from a favorite hiking leader, Megan from Canada and Australia, who says it's her favorite art installation in the world and you'll easily see why. It's one we won't ever forget!

The Sydney Apartment

Apartments are always a top priority for us. We spend extra time in it. We can't see why we should travel and have any less than we have at home. A view makes it even better and in this case both floors had total floor-to-ceiling wall-to-wall windows with a view overlooking the central business district, the harbor bridge, the botanical gardens and the opera house. What more could you ask for! Both floors also had full width balconies and a gas grill which we didn't use. The modern conveniences were all there and the owners hadn't spared any money in the build out. It was on the 12th floor and in a busy fun neighborhood called Kings Cross that might be like NYC's Village with lots of restaurants and bars. It was only a 15 minute walk to the Circular Quay, Gardens, Opera House or

Downtown, or over to Woolloomooloo or Rushcutters Bay. It was on an easy train and/or bus line which we had passes for and also took out to Bondi Beach for a famous fisheries restaurant.

The apartment wasn't perfect and did have some minor glitches but nothing insurmountable. At first we couldn't figure out how to make the huge espresso maker work. The owners had locked more closets and cabinets than they should. The air/heater was set to turn off every few hours. The second bedroom was very sparse. The inventory of towels was only one each.

From the website: Unique 2 story, 2 bedroom apartment in Sydney's iconic Top of The Town building. Spectacular views of the city skyline, Sydney Harbor Bridge, the Sydney Opera House, the Domain and Sydney Harbor. Enormous balconies on both levels, unbeatable location for Sydney's famous New Year's Eve fireworks and a short walk to the parade route for Mardi Gras. Walking distance to Paddington, Rushcutters Bay, Potts Point and Kings Cross, with the Sydney CBD easily accessible via train (1 stop) or walking. Bondi Junction is also only a short train ride (2 stops). Enter the apartment on the top floor, where there are two bedrooms and 2 full bathrooms. A balcony spans the entire width of the apartment so there are great views from every room. Downstairs is the large living and dining area, and another balcony with a BBQ and the same great view. Also

downstairs is the kitchen with stainless steel counters, gas stove and dishwasher. A laundry with washer/dryer and a powder room complete the lower level. A total of 145 square meters of space (1560 square feet). The apartment is in a security building with a 24 hr. concierge, a pool, sauna and a gym. Located above the famous Tropicana cafe and across the road from Bar Coluzzi, this is truly the best spot to enjoy all Sydney has to offer. Located mid-way between Potts Point and Oxford Street, walking distance to both.



View from the apartment - That's a rainbow in the middle!

Prices/costs

There is just no way around it – Australia is expensive for Americans. The US dollar to the Australian dollar conversion rate is close (maybe about 7% loss of dollar value in Australia). But everywhere we were amazed at hotel prices (\$295 to \$695 for a Marriott to a Hyatt and I paid near \$400 at Grace Hotel in CBD); dinners and coffees (\$20-25 cheapest plate and up with plenty of \$6 coffees), wines (from \$12 to \$22 a glass and at Ayers Rock starting at \$44 a bottle.) The best value was a \$43 7-day train-bus-ferry pass especially considering that the airport train trip of only 15 minutes was \$16.50 (a separate line so you pay anyway.) To go up Sydney Tower was \$25 plus another \$40 if you wanted the tour. Above numbers in Australian dollars so take away another 5-8%.

Hong Kong without me!

I groused that Tom wouldn't wait until I could go with him, but off he went anyway. You can tell how much influence I have! We were last there just before the change-over to Chinese ownership and then I had a whirlwind tour with my company and spent a few days in Hong Kong in 2005 or 2006.

His dream of having another room with a view of the Hong Kong harbor was realized and made even more special when he was upgraded to a suite. Here, taken from his desk with iPad with the Star Ferry and Avenue of the Stars walkway.



Hotel Intercontinental on Kowloon



Tom's room with a comp upgrade to a junior suite. See the desk? That's all window and where he took the picture of Hong Kong island. I'd last stayed on Hong Kong island at the Hyatt and would have had a view of Tom's hotel.



Here is what Tom might have seen from his hotel room – a night view of Victoria Harbor with Symphony of Lights, a nightly occurrence and includes fireworks for the New Years. From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Symphony_of_Lights

Notes from Tom:

I just got the concierge to book Chesa (famous Swiss restaurant in The Peninsula and one of our early extravagant eating experiences) tonight for 9 (I want to see the fireworks/light show first at 8 from my vantage point in the room. Then Tuesday at noon I'm going to the famous Chinese restaurant on the 25th floor of the Mandarin Oriental - Michelin starred and M-F they do dim sum that's supposed to be marvelous. Tough life.

Later: I'm in quicker than I thought I'd be. It's so hot and humid that I was melting plus, I'm looking at what I really came for. I ate breakfast/lunch in a bustling Chinese place and had a fried oyster pancake and a beer. Quite good with several nice small oysters and egg and of course fried. This being Sunday, the streets are extra crowded (or maybe they're always this way) with whole families out for the day. As I look down on the Walk of the Stars along the water's edge, there are lots of folks. And on Nathan Road, forget it. Wall to wall people. And I'd read how the mainlanders form lines to get into Armani, Prada, etc. to spend their money. I actually saw that today - doorman and all, just like a hot night club. The Peninsula is gorgeous as always. I used their john. Oh, by the way, the water out of the tap isn't for drinking and the hotel provides free bottled water.

Tom to Pat: What a wonderful thing this upgrade is. I'm sitting here at my desk watching all the activity on Victoria Bay with Hong Kong in the background and I'm just as fascinated now as I was so many years ago when I visited many times. The room is perfect for me and exactly what I'd hoped for. The room I had arranged and prepaid for would have been fine no doubt but to have all this opulence is just the frosting on the cake - I'm so fortunate/lucky. Tonight after the nightly 8 o'clock laser/light/fireworks show I'm having dinner at one of our early introductions to fine dining - Chesa in the Peninsula Hotel (a wonderful luxury landmark here). Then on Tuesday for lunch I'm having the famous gourmet dim sum at the Michelin starred Man Wah on the 25th floor of the Mandarin Oriental in Hong Kong. Boy, I sure lead a rough life. I'm still thrilled with my iPad. Stay tuned. Plenty yet to come.

Earlier: As you see from the pictures, I'm so lucky (well, one thing could be better). White coated hotel employee met me in the reception hall at the airport and escorted me to my S350 Mercedes with a white coated driver who whisked me to the hotel in 30 minutes. The back seat was fully adjustable and nice music playing. At the hotel, people falling all over themselves to serve me and the fellow at the front desk was very kind to give me this junior suite - really lovely as you see. They told me you really don't want a high floor because of the fog so I'm on the 5th. Had complimentary Jasmine tea (my choice) served. I don't know how I can be better placed. I finally had a little appetite on the way here from Bangkok and had one course only - black cod with some rice and bok choy and a Singha Thai beer that I like. Then had a little nap. So far so good with the "thing." The simple tape job from this morning lasted all day even with lots of walking. I think I'll have a drink and turn in. Pretty big day.

From his travel from Sydney to Hong Kong via Bangkok when he flew first class versus business class: Well.....I'm happy to report that I'm in a lounge like I've never seen before, even in Frankfurt (but not to diminish that). I have my own private room!!! I'll take a picture shortly and send it. I've just finished a pot of Earl Gray (no booze yet) and even on the plane, I walked on and asked if I could have a glass of Champagne and what do you think they served - Dom Perignon 2003. I had few glasses and even with my fish meal. When I finally got around to scotch, Blue of course. Couldn't believe the level of service. Only four people for 12 seats. I don't know how long first-first can last but they say they're phasing them out because nobody pays. (Tom got his through a miles/points method.) Had a nice nap but watched two moves before. Most comfortable seat I've ever sat in. I was met by a Thai AL rep with a sign - put me in a golf cart, escorted me through security and to the First Class lounge. Can't believe the level of service. Makes me feel very important. Went to duty free and 1 liter was 21 dollars! but I've only got four days. All for now but very happy.

A Monday update: I went down and talked to the concierge who looked at a couple of harbor tours but the timing wasn't good and he didn't think I'd like it more than 15-30 minutes anyway. Real nice guy with tons of hotel experience (we had a real nice conversation) whose family was at the Peninsula for three generations. He's been here 16 years and says there's no question but what the view from here is far superior to the HK side looking to Kowloon and since I was going to HK

tomorrow anyway, suggested I just wait until then. The Kowloon side is flat compared to the mountain across the harbor. So, I ended up getting a taxi to the huge shopping and business complex near here that also has a 100+ story building with an observation deck with a 360 view. He also suggested a high class Chinese restaurant called Kowloon Tang. I had corn and fish soup followed by fried oysters with caramelized scallions in port sauce. Terrific! For dessert I had a vanilla soufflé with mango sherbet. Took a while for the soufflé but was well worth the wait. I then tried for the observation deck but there were about 50 little kids going so I chickened out (they were very noisy just in the ticket area. I was going to tour the magnificent shops but [medical condition was irritating] so I got a taxi back here and I'm very comfortable at my desk and will eventually have a nap then a nice dinner somewhere. You probably won't be too surprised that I'm so happy here that I called down and asked to stay another night. Well, rest easy, they're starting construction on this level starting tomorrow so my room is not available. But - they offered the same level of room on the 12th floor (I'm on the 5th) but would have cost about another [double the amount] which they would have charged me too if my room had been available. But that I wouldn't have paid. What a deal I got (if you can call it that - I feel I really got my [money's worth]. So the plan for tomorrow is to check out around 10:30, leave my bag here, ferry to lunch, see if I can walk any, come back here and have their car take me to the Marriott. My flight is 11:10 on Wednesday. I think I'll be fine on the plane as being still is reasonably comfortable and I'm first-first again. In the meantime I'm content to hang out in my fabulous room and listen to music and watch the harbor.

Tom to Pat: Hong Kong is bigger, more beautiful, crowded (said to be the most crowded real estate in the world), and expensive. Even with all that, I'm very glad I spent the time and money to see it again but will most likely not come back. If I ever do a long haul flight again I think I'd choose Japan but haven't given that any thought. Dinner last night was a solid 8 and the place is exactly as it was (I confirmed) when it opened 47 years ago. We were there maybe 40 years ago when I was in Vietnam the second time and Diana was in Taipei and traveling to Saigon - two weeks with me and two weeks back in Taipei getting her next visa. We met up in Hong Kong during an R&R for me and somehow found this wonderful place. I even had the same dessert - a chocolate chalet (you'll see a picture) filled with ice cream. Nostalgic interlude. Did I send pictures of the room here (when I send pictures taken with the iPad there's no record like with regular email). Diana said you had a monsoon yesterday. What's with this weather? I'm off to the Hong Kong side in a little while. Much clearer today but I'm sure hot and sticky (not where I'm sitting though).

From Tom after dinner at his hotel: Dinner was very nice and I had another corn and seafood soup, BBQ pork, steamed rice, beer, jasmine tea. Lovely restaurant with my same view only this was on the first floor (5th is better) and impeccable service.

Tom's last full day: Took the Star Ferry over to HK for lunch. Very impressive place (Mandarin Hotel) and the help was abundant and a little overwhelming/hovering. But no doubt the best dim sum I've ever tasted but after four small things I still felt a little hungry so I got a spicy fried prawn dish that came with 6!!! pretty good sized prawns. I had two and brought the other four with me and they are now in the mini-bar. Dessert was mango cream (yum). I had my usual Chinese beer and continuous jasmine tea. So, the tally is a 9 Chinese



lunch yesterday and a 9 dinner at the hotel (Intercontinental) Chinese restaurant last night and an 8 from Chesa (Peninsula Hotel), and 9 for today's lunch. Not too bad. Picture is from the last morning before leaving Kowloon.

From Ellen about Hong Kong: I used to love the old Hong Kong airport that was right in town. I loved flying in at night. I'd look down and see all the lights from the little fishing boats and look up at all the stars and couldn't tell where the sky and water ended. Then with a rush, the plane would come to a stop and I'd be surrounded by skyscrapers. It took my breath away! The new airport is probably safer, but not as much fun. (Note by Diana: We totally agree about the old airport but the new one has this amazing bridge that's worth the trip. I also once sailed under it.)



Since some of us don't plan to ever see a real First Class, Tom kindly sent me this picture from his ride from Hong Kong to Chicago with the note that it wasn't as special as Thai Airways. Tough! Also note that he's having a good time with his new toy iPad.

The End

Well, not exactly but since I'm next off to hike in a few days I'd best stop this very long report on a very long and exciting trip.

Itinerary

Time zones: 9:00am in NY = 11am tomorrow in SYD = 10:30am in Ayres Rock/Darwin
9:00pm in Hong Kong

Mon Jul 23 - Diana

4:59pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#0997
8:24pm Arrive San Francisco SFO for plane change

10:45pm Depart San Francisco SFO via UA#0863

Wed Jul 25 - Diana

6:25am+2 Arrive Sydney Australia SYD – business class, flat bed seat, in bubble of 747
Flights: 6:23 and 14:40 = 24 hours total and pass international date line

Located in center of Sydney's CBD, on the corner of King and York streets; closest train station is Wynyard Station; once you have alighted, you will need to walk south, down York Street for about 5 minutes until you reach the front of our hotel. Yes mini-bar, as well as tea and coffee making facilities.

Hotel The Grace Hotel with marathon group
77 York Street, Sydney, NSW 2000 Australia, Tele: 61 2 9272 6888 or 800 68 2692
Marathon Tours has a day trip to Blue Mountain – declined
Hotel has internet for \$10 hr; \$25 day; maybe free at McDonalds local

Wed Jul 25 – Tom

2:00pm Car pick up
4:59pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#997
8:24pm Arrive San Francisco for plane change

10:45pm Depart San Francisco SFO via UA#863
6:25am +2 Arrive Sydney SYD on **Friday Jul 27**

Apartment In Darlinghurst – see info below at **Friday Jul 27- Tom**
Including train details

Thu Jul 26 - Diana

6:30am Breakfast served until 10:30am

7:30am Have luggage in lobby for loading. Use Marathon Tours luggage tag.
8:00am Depart Grace Hotel for transfer to Sydney Intl airport

9:50am Depart Sydney SYD via Virgin Australia DJ#1627 with marathon tours group
3:15 hour flight

1:05pm Arrive Uluru/Ayres Rock ULURU – AYQ or Connellan Airport

Look for Australian Outback Marathon sign and transfer to hotel

Hotel Sails in the Desert, Tele: 61 8 8957 7417
www.ayresrockresort.com.au

Yes coffee service and mini bar in room; Wi Fi w/\$24 day or \$10 per hour fee

Note: Bugs/mosquitos in area should be minimal but some need repellent.

6:00pm Outdoor Welcome Function – BBQ dinner at Sails in the Desert poolside

After being transferred from Uluru Airport to the Voyages Resort, you will check in to your hotel, receive your race registration pack, and have the chance to unwind. There are numerous pools, shops and café's to explore as well as the views from the several lookouts to enjoy. Enjoy a hosted training run at 4pm before our special outdoor welcome meal at Sails Resort poolside this evening. Meals included: Dinner.

Participants: Kelly Allen leader; Debbie Ingram who finished 100 at Vancouver 6/17 with Judy

Fri Jul 27

6:25am Sunrise Uluru Tour departs from hotel lobby. Watch sunrise over Uluru, then journey onwards for a base tour walk of Uluru before arriving at the Indigenous Center. A bag breakfast is included on this tour. Will return to hotel about 1pm.

Uluru Sunrise and Base Walk with Cultural Center Tour & Pasta Party. At 6:25AM you will be picked up from your hotel to visit the Uluru sunrise. With plenty of opportunity to see this amazing Icon of the Australian Outback up close, your camera will be your best friend. Breakfast will be provided and a special souvenir backpack is also included. You will also get to spend some time at the Aboriginal Cultural Center where you will be able to learn about the local indigenous people, the Anangu and walk the base of Uluru on a self-guided tour.

This afternoon at 4:00PM there is an opportunity to purchase our limited edition Australian Outback Marathon souvenirs as well as to change your running event if necessary.

5:00pm Meet in the Amphitheatre near the Sails in the Desert Hotel.

At 5:00pm join the group for a mandatory Outback Marathon opening ceremony and race briefing followed by our exclusive Pasta Party! At 6:00pm enjoy plenty of time to carbo load with fellow competitors as the excitement builds for tomorrow!

6:00pm Pre-race pasta party at Sails in the Desert Hotel
Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner.

Sat Jul 28

The 3rd Australian Outback Marathon - Today is the day we have all been waiting for!

Breakfast will open at 5:00AM. Runners will be transported to the race start at 6:45AM sharp from their hotel for the start of the Australian Outback Marathon which will begin just after sunrise at 7:45am. We will welcome you back home to the finish line for some light lunch with Uluru as the backdrop with plenty of tables, chairs, fruits, sandwiches, and drinks for you to stay and cheer on your fellow runners! <http://australianoutbackmarathon.com/>

This afternoon opt to do a sunset tour of Uluru or a sunset camel ride!

In the evening you are more than welcome to join us at 6:30pm for an informal get together at the Outback Pioneer Pub to celebrate your achievement. Be sure to wear your medals and come and dance the night away. Dinner on your own.

Meals included: Breakfast, Brunch (at race start/finish)

Sun Jul 29

Optional Kings Canyon Tour & Celebration Dinner

Today you get to rest and unwind after the exertions of yesterday. There is an optional "Pool" aerobics session at Sails in the Desert this morning to help release the tension in your legs and the rest of the morning and afternoon are yours to enjoy.

Opt to partake in a helicopter ride above Uluru and Kata Tjuta or perhaps visit Kata Tjuta on the "Valley of the Winds" walk or book a spa appointment and truly bask in your accomplishments!

4:00am Booked King Canyons Tour. This one-day tour will see you leaving the resort before sunrise and heading off to the amazing Kings Canyon. With plenty of opportunity to explore, the tour will have you back in time to refresh yourself prior to the Celebration Dinner this evening. Departs at 4am and returns by 4pm - in time to give 1 hour before dinner.

4:40pm Meet near piano at Sails in Desert hotel for beverage pre celebration dinner.

5:40pm Depart hotel for celebration dinner – Sounds of Silence dinner – return around 10pm. In the evening we will all gather together under the stars once more to commemorate your achievements at a typical Australian Celebration Dinner. You will be picked up from your hotel at 5:40pm and taken to our exclusive outdoor venue. Based on the multi-award winning Sounds of Silence dinner, this evening will be one of the highlights of your trip! This evening will feature a slideshow, awards presentation, fully hosted and multi-course meal, an excellent wine list, an on-site start talker, and a spectacular sunset (weather permitting), a perfect way to end your outback adventure. You will return at approximately 10:00pm

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner.

Sounds of Silence: At the Sounds of Silence experience you can dine under the canopy of the desert night, while your very own storyteller shares tales as told in the stars. Entered into the Australian Tourism Hall of Fame, Sounds of Silence offers the best of the Red Centre distilled into four magical hours. An evening of dining under the sparkling outback sky.
Sunset canapés: Your journey begins on a lone sand dune. A path takes you to an uninterrupted, three hundred and sixty



degree view of this vast landscape. In front of you is the fabled Uluru; behind you are the domes of Kata Tjuta and, possibly the most spectacular sunset you have ever seen. Here you enjoy sparkling wine and a selection of delectable canapés. Dining under the sparkling outback sky: As the sun sets, you feast on a BBQ buffet of authentic Australian delicacies examples include barramundi, kangaroo and crocodile, bush salads and classic desserts, complemented by Australian wines. Stargazing: Attention then turns to some of the world's best stargazing, as our star-talker takes you on a tour of the spectacular southern night sky. As you wind down after dinner, you are offered a choice of tea, coffee or port.

Mon Jul 30 - Diana

After breakfast, check out of your hotel and begin your journey home or on to Port Douglas to dive the Great Barrier Reef with the Marathon Tours group. Opt to stay longer at the Voyages Resort to explore more of Australia or perhaps to experience more of Australia with family and friends.

Meals included: Breakfast.

11:30am Bags packed and ready in lobby for flight departures – ask if later possible
12:30pm Ayres Rock Airport departure for flights home or to Port Douglas
-
2:00pm Depart Ayres Rock AYQ via Virgin Australia DJ#1630 – 3:15 hour flight
5:35pm Arrive Sydney SYD – on own

<http://www.airportlink.com.au/pdf/airportlink-information-brochure.pdf>. Take the airport link train to Central Station. Change to Bondi Junction. Get off at Kings Cross and walk to apartment.

Trains run approximately every 10 minutes and the journey into the city takes only 13 minutes. The international and domestic rail stations link directly to the City Circle.

When you get off the train at Kings Cross station:

1. Take the Darlinghurst Rd exit from the station.
2. Turn right and travel south along Darlinghurst Rd towards William Street for about 50m. You will see the giant Coca Cola sign up on your left. Cross Darlinghurst Road at the traffic lights.
3. Continue south, cross over Kings Cross Rd and Craigend Street. (There is a plaza with a large sculpture and a Chinese restaurant in the middle.)
4. You should be standing outside O'Porto Chicken at this point, on Victoria Street. If you look west across the road you (towards the city) will see a fire station, a bakery and a large white building, which is Top of The Town. This is where the apartment is. We are no more than 200 metres from the train station. It should only take you 5-8 minutes.

Backwards – see above

Fri Jul 27 – Tom

Apartment: 227 Victoria Street, Darlinghurst, Apt 1211, NSW 2010 Australia – thru Aug 4 check out
Apartment tele: 02 8096 1153. Local calls are free.
Landlady is Toni at toni.m.spencer@gmail.com or 0414-221122
International code from a U.S. number is 011+country code 61+number

Apartment is in Top of the Town Building, midway between Potts Point and Oxford Street. Bridge 1.86m; Opera 1.55m; Rocks 1.86m. Steps to Kings Cross, Potts Point and Paddington. 1 stop to CBD.

Tourist in Sydney with 4 full days

Marathon Tours package includes: •Return airport transfers from Ayers Rock airport to hotel •4 night accommodation •Breakfast daily •Pasta Party (pre marathon - Friday 27th July) •Celebration Dinner (post marathon - Sunday 29th July) •Other Dinners as specified above •All Tours/sightseeing/activities as specified above •Guaranteed entry to the Australian Outback Marathon (or shorter event) •Coolmax running top •Travelling Fit representatives on site

Sat Aug 4 – Tom

7:00am Train to airport
10:00am Depart Sydney SYD via Thai Airlines#476 - Conf #S6MST3
4:20pm Arrive Bangkok BKK for plane change

6:45pm Depart Bangkok BKK via Thai Airlines#602
10:30pm Arrive Hong Kong HKG

Transport: From Hong Kong airport – Intercontinental pick up outside baggage

Hotel Intercontinental Hotel Hong Kong for 3 nights checking out Aug 7
18 Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong China Tele 852 27211211
hkghc.reservations@ihg.com www.hongkong-ic.intercontinental.com

Sat Aug 4 – Diana

Check out of apartment by 10:00am
10:00am Depart via train to airport

1:50pm Depart Sydney SYD via United #840
10:15am Arrive Los Angeles LAX for plane change

12:50pm Depart Los Angeles LAX via United#0108 upgrade wait list
9:27pm Arrive Newark EWR

Car to pick up at airport

Tue Aug 7 – Tom

Move to airport hotel
Hotel Hong Kong Marriott Sky City
1 Sky City Road East, Hong Kong International Airport, Lantau Hong Kong
Tele 852 39691888

Wed Aug 8 - Tom

11:10am Depart Hong Kong HKG via United#896
12:50pm Arrive Chicago O'Hare ORD for plane change

3:17pm Depart Chicago O'Hare ORD via United#1001
6:42pm Arrive Newark EWR

Diana to pick up at airport

Emergency contact for Outback Marathon trip:

Goway Travel, Vancouver BC Canada Tele 604 264 8088 or 800 838 0618 www.goway.com

After hours: Ghila Schutte 0403 820 528 or Joelle Brodie 0410 906 930

For Marathon Tours office in Boston 617 242 7845 Mon-Fri

After hours Kelly@marathontours.com or emergency 978 578 6220

Tourist:

While in Australia – find McDonald's for a Rosti Brekkie Wrap

Are we sure this is English? Come to "Macca's" for the "Rosti Brekkie Wrap, (which) has a rasher of bacon, a freshly cracked egg, a slice of cheese, and a golden potato rosti ... topped off with BBQ sauce, on a flour tortilla." American translation: Come to McDonald's for the potato breakfast wrap, which has ham, a freshly cracked egg, a slice of cheese, and grated fried potato. Why the egg is perfectly square remains an Australian mystery.

From Susan Lenderking: Darlinghurst is a good area and so is Potts Point....some very good restaurants there (Jimmy Liks is one of them) and you can walk to downtown Sydney...it is about 15 minutes...and you walk through the Park/Domain...it is a nice walk to the Opera House through the Domain - goes along the water.

From Megan: The view from the apt does look amazing, and it's central and Tom can do some easy meals for himself rather than eat out all the time when you're in the Centre running your marathon. I have other ideas for your stay - the Maritime Museum at Darling Harbour, possibly a small plane flight over Sydney Harbour (leaving from Rose Bay, three bays to the east of Rushcutter's Bay), a meat pie from Harry's Cafe de Wheels (at Woolloomooloo Bay)...

Earlier from Megan: Darlinghurst is a happening place - there will be lots of choices of restaurants towards Oxford Street, and also in the Cross. The train is a convenient way to get to the CBD - straight in on the Eastern Suburbs line - no need to transfer, depending on where you need to go (most CBD stations are blocks apart, so transfers will be unnecessary or you can take the bus down William Street / Kings Cross) Paddington has some lovely terraced houses with wrought iron railings - in many ways your husband's choice will offer you more variety and activity than staying in the CBD. I used to live along Kings Cross Road (further east, where it becomes New South Head Road - about 1.5 km from the Top of the Towne), and I enjoyed being in a mixed neighbourhood (commercial and residential). A lovely walk into the CBD for you would be to walk into Rushcutter's Bay or down Darlinghurst Road to Macleay and over Potts Point into Woolloomooloo Bay, then the Domain and into the CBD. So in short, I think that it will be pretty central for you in Darlinghurst, but I haven't been into the Cross at night for a long time and think that if you are out at night, you might encounter people bar and nightclub hopping in the neighbourhood. Just a possible negative that I thought that I should tell you about.

Earlier yet from Megan when I was booked at the downtown Circular Quay Marriott: Your trip to Ayers Rock (Uluru) sounds great, and the stop in Sydney will be wonderful. Your hotel is very central - well worth it for convenience, I think. You're right on Pitt Street near the Quay - if you walk just a few blocks up Pitt (south, or away from the water) and take a right into Angel Place just before you reach Martin Place, you will get to one of my favourite public art installations in the world - Forgotten Songs.

<http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/cityart/special/ForgottenSongs.asp>

I love wandering the streets of Sydney and marveling at the Victorian architecture. I love the Museum of Contemporary Art down at the Quay (they were working on expanding it early this year, so it may still be closed when you get there), the Art Gallery of NSW in the Domain, wandering around the Botanic Gardens, the view from Lady Macquarie's Chair...we can compare notes when I see you in August. IF you want any further suggestions on directions to wander, art galleries, street art, or great urban walks, let me know! After the marathon, you may want to stick pretty close to your base, though!

Later from Susan and her local Australian friend: "She didn't give me the street name so not sure exactly where it is but Darlinghurst is a nice area and train does go downtown, just not to circular quay but she can get a bus on william street that goes to circular quay. I think the road the apartment building is on is victoria rd where all the cafes are and a few shops, so great area...."

Back to me: From what I know of Sydney from several visits is that Darlinghurst is a good area....lots of good restaurants etc and the Potts Point village area is charming. Sometimes it's good to stay a little out of town, especially if it is a trendy neighborhood and that's what you are getting there....a trendy neighborhood with lots to offer and very close to downtown and easy access by train and bus on William Street....I have walked it many times and it is about 20 minutes at most, probably less.

I can't believe you are coming up on your 100th marathon....are you sure you shouldn't be in the Guinness Book of Records???

One good restaurant in Potts Point is Jimmy Liks - it is just long tables and you have to sit side by side to each other, not facing. The tasting menu is fantastic. Asian fusion. No reservations. Go early...it gets crowded and a bit noisy when it is full. Jimmy Liks, 186-188 Victoria Street, Potts Point NSW 2011, Australia, (02) 8354 1400

