



Rat Tales

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Ballarat Bushwalking and Outdoor Club

BLUE MOUNTAINS WALKS

APRIL 14 — 23, 2006

TOUR SNIPPETS

TOURISTS COMPRISED: Angela, Bill, Karena, Alan, Marianne D, Graeme, Maria, David, Frank, Hans, Bob, Jan, Ann, Peter.

NARRANDERA — DAY 1

After departing Ballarat at 7:30am we had made our way on the mini bus, up via Bendigo, Shepparton and stopped for a memorable picnic lunch in a steady downpour by the Murray river at Tocumwal. Here we all stood under a picnic shelter enjoying Angela's varied lunchtime goodies and watching some keen people trying to water ski in the rain. After some refreshing cappuccinos from the local bakery we were back on the road again. By the time we got to our first overnight destination, The Narrandera Caravan Park, the rain and clouds had peeled back and the sun was shining thru as we all pitched our tents. Peter Briody 'won' a ride in a hot rod, for being the first one to erect his tent. Then in the evening the rain started once again. Luckily we managed to appropriate part of a roofed picnic shelter where we all settled in for the evening.

THE GRAND STAIRCASE — DAY 3

Today the weather was crisp and clear and we decided to get a feel for the Blue Mountains by exploring the Three Sisters. We followed the cliff top walk from the camping ground around to the main Three Sisters lookout. From here we descended onto the first Three Sister rock and then continued down the 1000 odd stairs of the Grand Staircase. From the bottom we followed the Federal Pass track around to the scenic railway. Here we split up into two groups, one ascending back up to the cliff tops and the other continuing on, trying to get to Ruined Castle.

RUINED CASTLE EXPLORATION — DAY 3

Written descriptions of the Ruined Castle walk were very misleading, with return times varying between 4 to 7 hours. On this walk we basked in glorious sunshine during our lunch break, at the base of the giant landslip, the whip of bellbirds echoed in the valley floor below. We could see where we were heading but we had to

travel around a large curve to get there. Being mindful of the time, we set ourselves a 3pm deadline after which we would turn back. Three pm came and reports from returning walkers also varied wildly as to how near or far the summit really was. David, who had been there before, many years earlier, knew that the top couldn't be that far away. In the end it was the thrill of adventure that spurred us on and we finally reached the summit in glorious afternoon sunshine at 3:40pm. After a one hour rest we departed post haste as we knew the day light hours were limited. We ascended a different staircase, the Golden Staircase in 30 minutes and arrived at the top of the cliffs just as the sun dipped down below the horizon. We then had to walk in the dark for another hour before we finally arrived back at the camping ground at 6:30pm.

WENTWORTH FALLS — DAY 4

Today we descended the spectacular Wentworth Falls escarpment to the bottom of the Falls where we had lunch. From here we returned to the bus via the National Pass track, which is even more spectacular. This track is cut into the sheer cliff face half way up the face.

CARD SCHOOL EVENINGS

The evening climate at Katoomba, which lies at just over 1000 metres altitude did get quite fresh. On our first night at Katoomba, I had to scrape the frost off the inside of the tent fly in the morning. The temperature had apparently got to 3 degrees that night, luckily the following nights were a bit milder. Anyway as most people retreated from the camp kitchen building to their tents, a morally bankrupt few, resorted to playing cards to keep warm. Bob & Jan Macallum helped to coach Hans, whilst Graham played from inside the comfort of his sleeping bag (It never gets this cold in his native Queensland). Graham had mastered the knack of counting cards, which would generally make him not welcome at the larger tables at Crown Casino, however we did enjoy passing the time, fine tuning our skills of the game 500.

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GRAND CANYON CIRCUIT AND PULPIT ROCK LOOK-OUT DAY 5

Today was a slightly overcast day but the grand canyon circuit was amazing and the afternoon walk around to the spectacular Pulpit Rock lookout was fantastic ! Fortunately your reporter has nearly run out of Superlatives. Bleeding amazing !

JENOLAN CAVES — DAY 6

Departed at 8:45am for the one and a quarter drive to Jenolan Caves. We split up when we got there with one group doing a conducted tour of the caves and the remainder exploring the giant Tudor style building called Caves House and having cappuccinos on the front terraces. The latte walkers then walked up to Carlottas Arch and further onwards to the McKeowon Valley lookout, before returning to meet up with the Caves group. Our lunchtime stop was on the banks of the turquoise Blue Lake, before we walked downstream for an hour, past the giant she-oak trees and the delightful bellbirds, to the old power station site. Here to our surprise we saw a wild baby piglet scrambling up the sides of the valley.

FRANK SINATRA, DEAN MARTIN & SAMMY DAVIS JNR MAKE GUEST APPEARANCE at KATOOMBA DAY 6

This evening Frank Hanrahan finally thawed out enough to offer us a song and warm up the evening, so accompanied by Hans and Bob, Deans classic Little Old Wine Drinking Me was sung. Frank then offered us some more songs and poetry to while away the hours. The hours also passed a bit quicker with the 8 litres of wine, both red and white that the group consumed every couple of nights. Nobody said we had to rough it !

SIX FOOT TRACK — DAY 7

Most of the group walked down the Megalong valley to the Coxs River crossing. Unfortunately your reporter didn't go on this trip, so I can't fill you in with the details. He did however go on an alternative side trip on the B. Marsh bus to Mt Wilson and the Mt Tomah Botanic gardens, both of which are worth a visit .

HANS AND FRANKS SYDNEY OUTING — DAY 8

After being dropped off at the top of the giant Landslip lookout, we walked down to the end only to find that one could no longer look straight down the giant cliff face, as the safety fence had been repositioned about 1metre back behind the edge (presumably for safety reasons) Anyway Frank & I weren't going to climb over the fence to try and have a look ! The morning wind was extremely fresh so we retreated back up the track and walked around to the Scenic Railway, which we caught to the bottom. After walking back up to Katoomba we caught the 10:25 to Central station Sydney. Our lunch stop was at

the Opera House, before we caught the Manly Ferry and had a most pleasant crossing past the harbour Heads opening to Manly. Here we walked down thru the main shopping mall to the open ocean, to find the beach reasonably crowded with swimmers and sightseers. We then adjourned to Kellys Bar overlooking the beach for a few ales. After a most relaxing afternoon we retraced our ferry, train and steps to Katoomba, where Hans had to road test the \$4 meal special at the Katoomba hotel. Both of our tourists then adjourned to the Karioke bar, where they enjoyed the music, before Frank was told to piss off back to Bacchus Marsh, when he told someone that we had travelled up on the B. Marsh bus. Apparently this poor deserving soul had been booked in B. Marsh many years ago and he hadn't forgotten it !(Hopefully if he ever comes back the police will be so kind to book him again !)

THE MEALS

Another memorable part of this holiday were the meals. Four people were rostered on every two days to prepare menus, organise shopping lists, do the shopping and prepare and cook meals. In total the snacks, lunches, main meals and deserts were excellently prepared and presented. Congratulations to all involved.

ALBURY STOPOVER — LAST NIGHT

Angela and Bill introduced us all to the Commercial Club in the middle of Albury. This is one Big establishment ! Here we enjoyed the smorgasbord menu and afterwards the free dance band which played the hits of the 50s, 60s and 70s,.

The local resident Elvis fan also hit the floor and later on did a special request – down at the end of Lonely street the heartbreak hotel. A few diehards (including our resident bus driver Alan Esnouf and Karena) ,partied on and didn't really get back to the caravan park until 1:30am It was a great night. The next morning we all stopped off for the MacDonaldis breaky before returning home to Victoria.

SPECIAL THANKS

To Angela and Bill Beard for all of the preparatory background organization, and actual organisation during the tour. Thanks also to our two splendid bus drivers Alan and Bob, who piloted us all the way up and back, and thanks also to all tour participants who really made it such a great memorable trip .

Special Correspondent: HANS TRACKSDORF