



Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



Our Easter roadtrip out west!

by Amaru & Suzanne, April 4th 2010

Another Easter long weekend and another road trip... this time we're exploring some areas of Central West NSW!

It's almost becoming tradition now to go away somewhere over the Easter long weekend. With 4 days off you can cover quite a bit of terrain and get to see a lot of different areas.

As we have a beach holiday coming up soon (Fiji is up next) we decided to skip the ocean side on this trip and travel inland. After a bit of investigating we decided to visit Orange and Mudgee (for some wine samplings) and Dubbo for its zoo.

We beat traffic by setting off early of Friday morning and managed to cross the Blue Mountains without any issues. Our first stop was Bathurst where the plan was to drive along the racetrack on Mt Panorama, but unfortunately on that day a race was on and the circuit was closed off to the public.



Driving across the Blue Mountains
Always impressive to see...



We've reached Bathurst but couldn't access Mt Panorama due to racing

Well, what can you do... We had a look at the track from a distance, took some obligatory touristy photos and continued on our way...

Due to the short stop we had in Bathurst we arrived in Orange at midday, visited the information centre to get our bearings and find out where the vineyards were located and started our tour.

I knew that the area was famous for its wines but I was still quite surprised by the number of cellar doors available in the Orange area. We didn't really know where to start as we didn't really know any of wines, so we just selected a specific path to drive through and visit as many cellar doors as we could along the way (not all of them were open during Easter).

One of the things about cellar doors and wine tastings that we really don't like is to be the only people there. This puts quite a bit of pressure on you to actually buy something and not only sample and continue along the way as we normally do ;)

So when we arrived at our first cellar door and realised that we were the only ones there we were a bit timid at first. But, obviously one of the main advantages of being the only people there is that they really take good care of you.

A good example was the second place that we visited. Here we were seated on a porch overlooking the vineyards, sampling wines while having some great discussions with the wine maker. No pressure on buying at all and we were also offered coffee. The simple fact that the wines were great made it an easy choice to buy!



Driving through the area we saw fields and fields of apple trees and the only bit of disappointment was that the vineyard that makes Apple Cider was closed on that day...

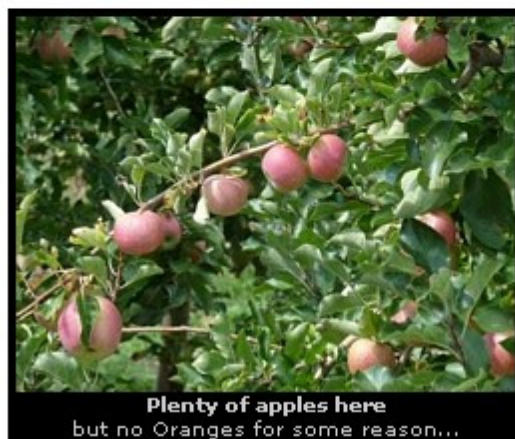
The rest of that day we spent in the town of Orange, walked around in one of its parks and then found ourselves at a very nice wine bar where we sampled more of the local produce ;)

As it was Good Friday and we hadn't made any reservations for dinner most places were booked out, we found one Chinese Restaurant that was open and sat down to eat. Our waiter was new (his first day) and he got a few things mixed up. I ordered some Chinese Tea and was served a cup with hot water and a tea bag... and secondly instead of Pork, we got Prawns.

Well, we kept the prawn dish to not get him in trouble and they turned out to be really good so we were happy in the end... gotta love small towns Asian Food!

The next morning we set off to Dubbo, arrived at the zoo about an hour after opening, managed to find parking and went to rent some bikes to get around with in the park.

After waiting in line for our turn we were advised that they were all out of bikes so we stepped to the side and were wondering what to do. We then hear the next person say he wants 2 adult and 2 children bikes and now they apparently have them available. I asked again and was told this time (after the attendant actually looked around) that they had 2 (!!) bikes left.



I quickly sent Suz to guard the bikes while I filled in the correct forms and paid for them... we seriously got the very last 2 bikes that were available. The people working there told us that they've only run out of bikes twice before.

Well, we grabbed our bikes, put on our cool helmets (sarcasm is on an all time high today) and took off. Now you don't need a bike to see the park, you can just drive around with your car. Obviously the annoying part of this is that you need to drive and park all the time if you want to experience the animals at all.

We spent a few hours at the park, taking our time gazing at the animals. We even got a few laughs at a few spots here and there. The funniest though must have been when we were watching the Rhinos.

One of the males was a bit excited and his manhood was clearly visible, we then heard a small child commenting this by saying "Look Daddy, the Rhino is doing a poo". The Dad looked over and said yes, yes before he quickly led her away =)

Besides this the Gibbons were the highlight of the day... They were really putting on quite a show, running around howling at each other and then freezing in a pose for the photos.

We had a great day at the Zoo, the weather was perfect (nice and sunny but not too hot), the animals a lot of fun and the company just couldn't get any better ;) After handing in our bikes we drove and found our hotel, freshened up a bit and then went back into town.



Overlooking the grapevines
while waiting for our sampling to arrive



These grapes are freshly picked
and ready to be squashed!

Later that afternoon we visited the Old Dubbo Gaol (that means Jail for our American friends), where we wandered the grounds, saw the cramped cells and also got to experience the scary solitary cell. The solitary cell was a very small room and once you entered you could not see any light at all... just being in there for 30 sec was scary and I can't imagine what a few days in there would be like.

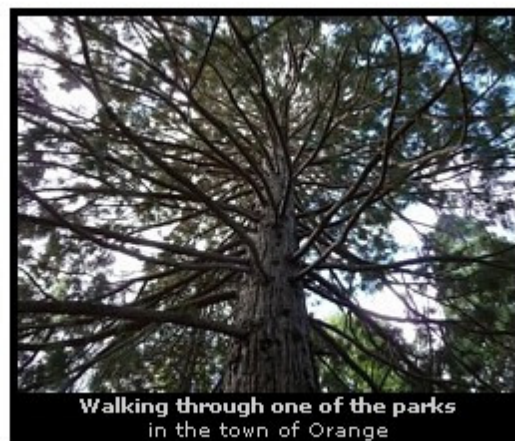
Well, we saw the gallows as well where hangings took place and wondered which one would prefer out of the solitary or gallows. Would you rather go insane or be dead?

We had an interesting night at our hotel that evening... We were laying in bed reading and watching some TV when all of a sudden something came flying past us!!

We both jumped and look around and noticed that it was a locust. Well, we remembered that we had seen a can of insect spray so we used it and went into the bathroom to dispose of the dead insect and noticed HEAPS of small insects.... I clearly had some work to do!

So, I went on an insect killing spree and noticed that there was a small gap in the window where they had all come in through, I sealed it and after cleaning up the mess assumed that my work was done...

5 minutes later another locust came flying in the room.... Seriously, where are they coming from?!? I looked everywhere at every window and eventually I saw that there was a small gap under the door so I grabbed some hand towels and made sure it was sealed and while I was doing that another 2-3 locusts sneaked past me.



Walking through one of the parks
in the town of Orange



Plenty of Roses
Some of them with visitors as well...

Later on while reading the hotel description it did say that since the area is close to the desert and very dry they do get quite a few insects.... really, a FEW?!? Anyway, we eventually got rid of them all and the rest of the evening continued uneventful.

We continued our roadtrip the next morning, passed Dunedoo - where Suz insisted on stopping to go to the "Dunny", so that she can say she went to the Dunny at Dunedoo, and also had a short stopover at Gulgong which is a beautiful little town that still looks like it would have during the 19th century gold rush.

We eventually ended up in Mudgee which was our last stop on our small roadtrip. As well as in Orange you'll find lots and lots and vineyards and cellar doors just waiting for us to come and sample their goods.

We of course we didn't want to disappoint them so we made an effort in visiting a few of them and even picked up a few bottles here as well ;) Later on we drove home with another stop in Katoomba for a hot soup (we were a bit chilly in the mountains) before we made it home!

So, another Easter came and went and we had another great little roadtrip, in fact it was so good that in the future I don't know if we should go to the Hunter Valley, Orange or Mudgee for wines!



We found a great wine bar in Orange
Quiet and with good wines!



Hmmm....
What are you doing with that?



Suz on a bike
At the Taronga Western Plains Zoo



"Look Daddy it's going to the toilet!"
Kids comment to a "happy" rhino



Biking around the zoo
is a great way to get around...



Washing time!
The Hippos are really loving it



Who needs a dentist...
when you have a pressure hose!



African Elephants
Big boys...



Caught in the act...
Yeah I know... we're weird ;)



Still in the park
Enjoying a lovely sunny day!



The Gibbons put on
quite a show for the crowds



They were chasing each other
while howling loudly... hilarious!



Here Kitty, Kitty...
Good Kitty!



We found some massive turtles in the middle of some... hmmm... activities



Talk about hiding in your shell
Can barely see it's face...



Jail or Gaol?!?
Old Dubbo Gaol is where we are...



We had a free afternoon in Dubbo and spent it at a Prison...



The Cells
Quite small...



The Gallows of Dubbo Gaol
Still quite scary...



I managed to lock Suz up
And she looks very happy about it!



Not totally unexpected...
My T-shirt will get me in trouble ;)



We're off the main path now...
Dirt roads ahead!



We found Dunedoo...
where a loo stop was mandatory ;)



Along the Main street
in Gulgong



Gulgong is a very cute town
Very old fashioned...



And the town also contains
lots of old fashioned shops



Made it to Mudgee
Time to sample some more wines



We'll start with the bubbies
and finish with the fortified reds...



**This is what a cellar door
should look like!**



**White port...
It was very, very good!**



**The grapes are still hanging
The season is just about to kick off here!**



**Suz sampling some great whites
The reds were more my department ;)**

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