

TIME TRAVEL

Australia

SPRING 2002

A downturn in the travel industry following the 11 September tragedy caused us to cancel two tours in 2002 (Spain and the Middle-East). Despite such an inauspicious start, we finished with two very successful tours. Both Ireland and South America tour filled very quickly and went off without a hitch – well almost.

The fear of terrorism has not left us and the Bali bombing was a stark reminder that the actions of a crazy few affect us all. We are being positive and will go ahead with a tour of Egypt and Jordan later in 2003 as part of the Myths, Magic and Extra-Terrestrials tour. Of course, should Iraq erupt in full scale war, our plans may have to be modified somewhat!

NOW FOR A BRIEF SUMMARY OF 2003

For the first time we included canal barges on part of the Ireland tour. Apart from a few nautical mishaps (most of them mine!), this proved to be a very popular and very enjoyable part of the trip. The calm experienced on these waterways was unique and we will certainly look at including the canals in the future. Our bus driver, John, had been driving tour buses for many years and was an asset to the tour. However, it was interesting to learn that he had never been to many of the sites we visited and in the end he commented that he could not work out why so many tourists went to Blarney and Bunratty Castles when there were so many more interesting sites to see. While we were on the subject of driving, Bobbie, from Atlanta (see following article), had trouble believing that the single lane bitumen roads were the main roads between major towns. She quickly worked out that the only difference between highways and secondary roads were the white lines painted down the centre!

South America was wonderful, yet again. Although I am beginning to wonder if someone in Puno doesn't like me. For the past four tours, either getting to or leaving Puno has always resulted in some drama. This year there was a strike scheduled for the Wednesday, the day we planned to drive to Cuzco . A quick re-scheduling had us cram in two tours and drive to Cuzco on the Tuesday. It was hectic but we made it and had a day free in Cuzco to recuperate.

Only a small group took on the Inka trail this year. I was accompanied by four women who all left me in their wake as I coughed my way over the passes. They did so well that when we visited the ruins at Machu Picchu , they just had to climb Huayna Picchu before doing anything else! Well done Gwen, Helen, Jenny and Cecilie.

Andres, for those who know him, has a new restaurant in Cuzco . Macondo is doing well and his mother is looking after that. 'Fallen Angel', as you can imagine, is purely Andres, somewhere between fire and ice!. He has outdone himself and the food is excellent – although many thought Macondo won on the desserts.

A little closer to home, we began excavating a rubbish tip associated with a logging camp on the south coast of NSW early this year. This was part of a series of weekend archaeology field workshops organised through University of Sydney CCE and ANU CCE. The aim of the workshops is to give people an opportunity to learn some of the basic, practical archaeological field techniques. We couldn't let students loose on a 'proper' site, so we chose the next best thing – a 'real' excavation on a rubbish tip! Despite the oldest artefact yet located being little more than 80 years old, the joy of discovery appears as great whether it is 50 years or 500 years old.

Comments from participants have been quite interesting. One gentleman came down solely to keep his wife company, he wasn't interested in archaeology at all. By the end of the weekend he may not have been 'hooked' but he admitted to me that he thoroughly enjoyed himself.

This project will continue for a few more years and the next workshop is scheduled for February 2003. A similar weekend is planned for April when we will begin work on the Cowra POW Camp. This is a major project and students will assist with field research, survey and excavation.

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