

Cape To Cape Capers



Cape To Cape Track

19-26th March 2022

Wandering in Western Australia



CANCELLING PARADISE!

Of all the upcoming possible holidays we have planned for this year (2022) and next (2023) that could have been cancelled, we did not expect it to be our trip to Lord Howe in March. We had been looking forward to this indulgence for a long time. It wasn't just that we had booked accommodation on the island (the island is only allowed to have 400 visitors at a time) it was that we had booked the Seven Peaks Walk, touted as one of Australia's Great Private Walks, and suitably expensively priced. When I found out about the program I preempted the bookings for this year, checking the website when they said the dates would be available, and almost daily after that until they were posted. Because we wanted to stay a few extra nights the resort offering the package offered us a few different accommodation options (those doing the Walk are allocated only one style of room). For a bit more comfort and indulgence we chose a slightly bigger room. If only we had stuck to the standard...

Around a week before our departure date however we received an email from the resort entitled...***Urgent, Pinetrees booking – 18 - 28 March 2022...*** We were driving back from my eye appointment and had just entered the M1 from Reedy Creek Road. I could not believe what I was reading. This couldn't be happening! There was no explanation as to what exactly had happened, just a notice that the room was unoccupiable, and that they were cancelling us out.

I finally got hold of the resort travel agents by phone. Apparently the unit we had booked had been flooded and due to the timing a fix was not going to be possible in the time between now and our stay. There was 'no more room left at the Inn', to use a worn-out metaphor, so we were crossed off

the guest list. 'Have you rung any other accommodation providers to see if they have room for us?,' I asked. 'No,' was the reply, 'and I have 35 phone calls to make.' (I am not sure how she got to that number given the number of days in question between now and then). 'Ok, so do you have a list of the island accommodation providers and contact details?' I asked. I was determined to try and salvage this. We had been waiting for over a year. We were so looking forward to it. The travel agent did end up sending me a list of accommodation place names and email addresses, noting that it was old and some places may no longer be in business. So, I constructed an email entitled '*Pinetrees Lodge Maintenance Refugee*' and sent it off. There were a couple of immediate bounce backs and initially I dismissed these as businesses no longer in existence. I got one immediate reply to say there was no room at a particular establishment, and one shortly after stating three nights were available but I would have to book them via the website. There was no point doing this until I could secure the other nights. The third response was from one of the two top glamorous resorts on the island, at \$1900 per night all inclusive, but he only had three nights. It would be messy, and unnecessarily expensive if we booked the two offers that had come in, but they were not consecutive dates and I still hadn't covered all the dates of the walking program. A fourth and fifth positive response by evening gave me dates at the start of the run and an overlap of already offered days. The next morning I tried a different tack and re-looked at the bounced emails. One business still seemed to be operating when I searched the internet but now had a more professional email address (rather than the @bigpond.com address I had been given). I sent a modified request to this new email address and waited. In the meantime a

very disappointed husband (understandably) is getting disheartened and eventually tells me to cancel the whole lot...the travel agent had after all, offered a full refund: their component would appear immediately in our account, a refund from Qantas may take some time. So, deflated, I left written instructions to do just that. Of course about half an hour after this I got a response from the more modern email stating she had six nights! In other words I could have strung two nights from one provider with the now six consecutive nights and got eight out of the original ten nights, be able to do the Seven Peaks Walk package, and we would still have had a couple of days on the island to explore by ourselves. Clearly my timing was shocking! I am very grateful to those that got back to us with positive offers and when we do rebook Lord Howe we will try to share ourselves around those establishments: two are self contained, and two very indulgent!

So now where were we? We had a dock booked for 12 days. We had a contractor lined up to do some work (hopefully) whilst we were away, and we had nowhere to go. It was still hot and wet in QLD, NSW was on the nose because of this incident, Andrew's idea of not going hiking and doing something radical and catch up with Victorian friends was tempting, but dismissed because I didn't want any complications just in case we caught Covid before we went to Canada (Victoria's numbers were soaring again), and given the time spent there last year we have had enough of Tassie for a while.

What about Cape To Cape? I asked.

When we first heard about Cape To Cape, around 12 years ago, it was touted as being 140km long, from Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin at the bottom south west corner (ish) of Western Australia. Presently it is

touted as being slightly shorter, temporary and permanent route changes mucking up the numbers. The route is dotted with settlements and can be done, if prior arrangements made, with comfortable accommodation along the way. The lass who gave us this information was an accommodation provider at Prevelly and was willing, as were others she said, to transport your sleeping gear from provider to provider. 'Interesting,' I noted at the time: but we had just finished our longest walk ever (at that time), an 88km section of the Bibbulmun Track, and our bodies were still recovering. We were also, at the time, Victorians, and a very long way from home, and couldn't even contemplate when we would get back. The idea was put in the back of my mind as a potential, someday, maybe, but given the distance to get there, the circumstances would have to be right.

Of course we got to WA in 2017 (by boat) but given we had said goodbye to Cilla when we got to Freo, and Tiger had his own medical issues, there was no way of contemplating the walk at that time.

Because of its locality and a plethora of accommodation providers, and, usually, camping spots along the way (some currently closed (during our walk in March 2022) because of the devastating bushfire last December), it is a walk that can be organised on one's own. But not with my current state of mind, and with only a few days to spare!

So I got on the internet, had a look at a couple of provider/host companies that led guided walks along the Track and found one that just happened to have a day walking end-to-end tour running within the dates of our original planned holiday. Now all I had to do was see if they had room for us.

The host company owns accommodation from where you are based, and you complete the Track in day walks. There was no room left in their accommodation but there was next door at a resort with slightly fancier rooms, an option they usually provide for a slightly higher fee. Of course we ended up paying a bit more again, as the usual room at this accommodation for the walk was booked out, the only available option was a two bedroom apartment. At this point in my discussion with the host I wasn't worried about a few more dollars, I was just happy to get a place. (And as it turned out, the bonus of a bath which, combined with the provided Epson Salts, provided a wonderful relaxing end to the walk days when needed).

Of course the only complication was that we were expecting mountain walks, and had been training for them, including ensuring that we made the fitness requirement for Lord Howe of 600 steps in 20 minutes (walk at Apple Tree Park on 9th January...See Aboard Sengo January 2022). We hadn't physically or psychologically planned on beach walking, although ironically our last long (3 hours, 20 minute) walk was around the top of South Stradbroke Island (11th February 2022) and mostly along sandy beaches. Perhaps our subconscious minds knew something our conscious minds did not (it has happened before).

The Walk. The distances walked were at the top end of our preferred daily range and sometimes the days felt long, although with early starts we were usually off the track by mid afternoon. Andrew and I were usually 'tail end Charlies'. Several factors contributed to this. Firstly we are used to walking at a certain pace, indeed the walking poles (we were the only ones with them) tend to dictate one's cadence, (and can become a bit of a hindrance in certain terrain). Secondly there was an individual in

the group who admitted that he just put his foot down and focussed on walking. This meant he provided a good pace, matched by others but also matched by the guide. We got the interps at the major interps spots but missed out on the gossip whilst they waited for us. Thirdly, unlike the individual who just wanted to get the mileage done with a bit of sightseeing, we wanted to see the track, and not just walk it. And fourthly, we tend to like walking in peace, something you are not going to get being in the middle of a group. On the last day the guide sends you through a section of bush to focus on the 'now.' That is not quite how he puts it, but his technique is lovely. I guess it is a chance to get participants to focus on their current position rather than just rushing through to get to the end of the track because they are so close to the end goal. However we try to walk in the 'now' all the time (which admittedly is a bit difficult when you are conscious of catching up to your rushing group and not being overtaken by another).

We did miss out on seeing things that others of faster calibre saw, but we weren't exactly slow. When we reached the tourist area at Hamelin Bay the guide who had caught up to us (having held back a bit) said we were two minutes early, so clearly we were walking the required average pace. We had struck out for that 7km beach walk at our usual steady pace. Others had either rushed ahead or lagged behind to enjoy the sea, beach, dead sea creature, or visitor's dog, and most had come in to the destination after us. It is probably the only day where I can say just about everyone in the group mentioned they were tiring out because of the last stretch of beach walking on the sand, except us. I suspect there was some muscle memory happening in our case. Of course going uphill slowed me down, as per usual, and going down hills slowed Andrew down, as per usual, and

going up soft sand dunes really sent me behind. Fortunately I wasn't the only one with this issue; one other female on the tour had the same sand dune struggles as well.

Guides. On both previous occasions where we have done guided hiking tours (one a through-hike (Overland Track, Tasmania 2005 via huts) and one a series of day hikes (Bruny Island Long Weekend, Tasmania (2021 -glamping) between the Tassie Trail adventure (I didn't write this up)) we have had the same guides. This time we had different guides over the seven days: two we got for two days each, and the rest one day each. Each guide brought a different skill set and knowledge base to the day, all informative with different styles and some were fantastically passionate. We also had two newbies on board and I really enjoyed the company of those individuals, their background's were really interesting and I was glad I got the opportunity to pick their brains.

We did get the comment from two guides however with reference to the 'hare and the tortoise'...I am not sure whether it was meant as a positive or not.

Photos. Being out of practice I thought I might revert back to the one photo per hour scenario that I have used previously on the recent long walks. This didn't happen. I was either caught up in talking to other participants (occasionally we weren't at the end of the line), concentrating on where to put my feet, giving up on the camera and just enjoying the scenery (the idea of getting back into my good camera got kiboshed when it refused to work, and because I was frustrated and disappointed at this I missed putting the back-up waterproof camera on the right settings. I have a couple of arty washed out photos that should be dominated by a brilliant rust colour), and

hesitating to stop and take the time for a photograph because as there were two groups doing this walk I didn't want to be overtaken. The second group, in theory, started thirty minutes behind us, but always seemed to nearly catch up by the end of the day's walk. In the end I reverted to quick, rushed and briefly considered snapshots mostly with my phone (rather than well framed photographs with a dedicated camera), and hoped they would not be too fuzzy.

The photos in this write-up are small with low clarity; predominantly so I could fit a lot of them in to a reasonable sized document.

Photos of us are courtesy of Sheree, Liz, Matt, Trevor, Kirke and Fiona! I realise I was grimacing in the final few photos - a direct result of very painful, wind-burnt, lips.

Food. You can never eat to perfect health when you are not in control of preparing the food. I had emailed the company the four main allergens that I have and was told they weren't a problem. Unfortunately because I don't eat wheat I was shoved in the 'Gluten Free' tag, and, at the very end of the trip when there were some indulgent sweets available with the champagne upon completion of the walk, the 'Gluten and Dairy Free' tag. As there were two groups doing this at the same time I suspect someone in the other group was dairy free but imagine my disappointment when the smaller boxes for the 'Gluten Free and Dairy free diets' did not contain the chocolate coated strawberries that we had been led to believe were on offer. I pinched some out of the normal box...I didn't get around to asking the ingredients of the other nice looking sweets, I got the feeling I had rocked the applegart by complaining about the strawberries.

Lunch was always provided at the start of the day. I usually ended up with a wrap when others got wraps or sandwiches - I think because it was easier. I didn't ask the exact ingredients, I didn't want to know as I knew there were likely clashes with my blood type diet. The breakfast provisions provided were terrific but whomever tried to get cereal for me didn't read the ingredients on the box as the product contained one of my allergens. One dinner also had a dubious looking grain and the bulk of the accompaniment was potato, another one of my allergens. For breakfast we generally stuck to the provided cooked items and yoghurt and fruit, what we generally eat at home anyway, and we were grateful they topped up on used items upon request. Scroggin/trail mix was provided as was plenty of fruit, although we handed all the oranges back. Bananas, whilst high in sugar and which have the potential to make us both a bit snitchy (if we eat them constantly), became a lunch time regular, even if the sandwiches/wraps filled us up. The extra carbs/sugar a good bit of energy to get us through. As we had come off a fasting diet for the previous six weeks, the extra calories and carbs must have been quite a shock to our poor bodies. Morning tea was a 'cake' of some kind. Having been thrown in the 'gluten free' bucket I was usually, but not always, eating something different to the rest of the group. All were tasty and sweet but I knew we were going to take a while to get off the sugar when we got back to boat (getting over a sugar addiction is like giving up alcohol if you are an alcoholic; you can't go back to even one sample without getting caught in the cycle again).

How did the body survive?

If you don't consider the issues with our boots, then remarkably well

Feet. A hundred and twenty, thirty, or forty (ish) km is no mean feat, and when it

involves varying terrain it can take a toll physically. The emphasis in the pre blurb from the host company, and the pep talks by the guides was about looking after our feet. If we take away issues created by faulty shoes, see below, we find Andrew had no feet issues and I had two very minor and tiny blisters...(our shoes were well worn in).

Faulty shoes. However, in my case had I continued to walk in shoes that I didn't initially realise were filling up with sand, the story could have been very different. It was Day 6 when, as the day progressed, I felt an ever increasing pressure area of the internal Goretex lining upon the top of my foot. I wondered why it was pulling away from the inside of my boot and it wasn't until the boots came off back at base that I discovered sand and ash had poured in between the layers, and a sand bag increasing in size was pushing down on my feet.

Not knowing how this had happened and having no alternative heavy walking footwear the only way to fix this was to cut the internal Goretex layer with a knife to let the sand pour out. Andrew on the other hand had not been so lucky. The sand in his boots had, instead of settling above the foot and peeling the Goretex layer off over the toes, found its way around the front and side of the foot, settling more and more sand in between the toes and the boot. What this did was reduce the space in the boot and Andrew ended up with black toes on Day 3 with no obvious explanation. You usually get black toes when your toes knock against the front of your shoes if you don't have them tied up well enough, or the shoes are too small. Neither of these scenarios were likely under normal circumstances, and we were dumbfounded for several days until we realised what the issue was. Andrew had

walked over 100km of the Tasmanian Trail in these boots, as well as 100km of the Mackay Hinterlands Great Walk, and managed lots of other shorter day walks without an issue. He couldn't understand what was going on. It was only when we realised I was carrying around a sandbag of differently distributed material that we knew what his issue was. By this time it was Day 6 and he had hiked unknowingly in damaging shoes for three days. His toes and feet had of course suffered because of it (although he had been completely stoic and despite mentioning when he got black toes, had not complained since - it must have been increasingly painful and uncomfortable for him). Fortunately however he had an alternative and swapped to a different set of rugged shoes on Day 7. The hope was that once we were back home we could suck the sand out with a vacuum cleaner and regain the use of his boots. I had to stick with my now cleared, but no longer waterproof, pair.

General muscular stiffness. A hot bath was welcome relief after Day 1 and Day 2, and the battery powered massager really welcome on my thighs Day 3, 4, and 5, but by then I think my body had got used to its load and at the end of Day 6 and Day 7 I didn't feel the need for any muscular relief at all. Yes, I did a few yoga back stretches at night, and even some on the track, because I knew my back was a little out. Interestingly a niggly upper hamstring muscle that had

been annoying me before the walk, and subsequently after the walk, was mostly forgotten during the trek. Perhaps other niggles were more prominent.

Our fellow walkers. Andrew wasn't the oldest and I wasn't the youngest (although as mentioned before on average we were probably the slowest). Our group was made up of a mixture of interesting and friendly individuals and I enjoyed chatting to every one of them. The other group we didn't get to know well, although they were friendly enough and welcoming if you tried to join them at social occasions and down time.

Would we do the Cape To Cape Track again but on our own? Probably not; there are so many other great walks available in Australia. Some of these can be easily organised by individuals, some it might be easier to get a professional company to guide you, and some, where popularity is increasing you may just have to do in professional company with others anyway even if you could in theory organise to walk it yourself, because the booking system has become so convoluted and difficult to get on to (there is at least one walk that has been on our list (for 20 years) that has apparently, I am told, become almost too difficult to organise as a 'solo' walker).

PREPARING TO LEAVE.

16th March 2022. I got up before dawn, around 0530. The sky was grey. A small amount of pink was visible in the eastern sky. Winds were calm and there was an incoming tide. Presently getting sick of the constant twittering I went out to chase the swallows away, but they seem to have done that themselves

My eye appt this morning was via Skype. A new concept for me. (I think I may have used Skype once before - about a decade ago) and the resultant recording showed my ineptness for directing the camera on my phone. Medical appt over we picked up the anchor (it took a while to clean it) and headed up the Coomera River. The aim was to anchor off The Boat Works until tomorrow morning when our pen was due to be free. As it turned out we were able to get on dock today; this meant extra expense but the opportunity of a nice long shower (well long compared to our standard) and the chance to give my hair a good wash was worth it.

Andrew had a chat with some people regarding our leaky hatches, I got the rubbish out, and we conducted a final check through of our travel lists and packing, before going to bed to wait for tomorrow.

17th March 2022. To make things easier we had breakfast at the on-site cafe at The Boat Works. This meant I didn't have any dirty dishes to deal with before we left. A friend came by to collect my old MacPac day pack (not needed now I have the Osprey branded unit) and we returned a book her husband had lent us on the Klondike Gold Rush in the Yukon, Canada. It had given us a great insight into an area we are hopefully venturing into later this year. In the meantime the shipwright took some of our top hatches off to be taken to a local contractor who had suggested, that once he had a template he could produce new hatches within a couple of days. Hopefully we will have new, leakproof hatches when we get back.

Originally we had organised a local driver to take us to the airport with a 1030 pick up. This was changed to 1200 by the driver so they could fit another job in, but the timing wasn't an issue for us - we were staying at the Airport Ibis overnight for a morning flight tomorrow so getting there after midday was fine. I tried to arrange someone to pick up our old scuba gear but this hadn't happened by the time we left. We had a late lunch and a normal-ish time dinner at the hotel; both meals, I am pleased to say, were better than the meals we had during our last stay here.

The wind when we left The Boat Works was reasonable, nothing out of the ordinary, but when we got out of the car at the hotel it was extremely strong. I didn't check the bom.gov.au observations but I wouldn't have wanted to be in a plane taking off or landing today.

We enjoyed another indulgent shower and watched AFL football on tv until we went to sleep at the end of the second game.

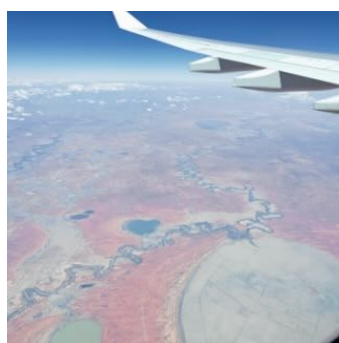
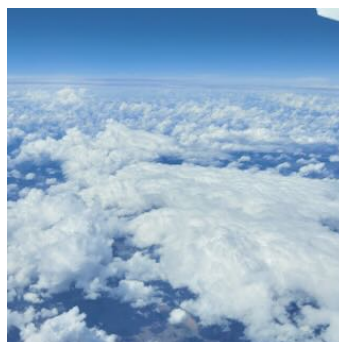
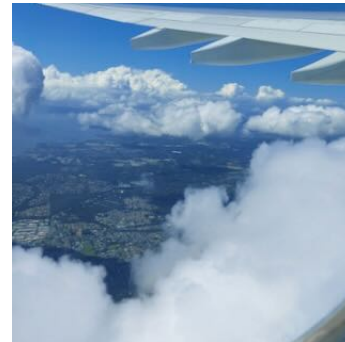
HEADING WEST

18th March 2020. I was up before dawn but I couldn't do much. In such a small room all I really could do was lie back on the bed until Andrew woke up.

Breakfast was over and we were back in our room by 0655. We headed for the Terminal building at around 0800 and decided that it would be easier sitting in the eating area than sitting amongst other passengers waiting for at least one flight, if not two, to depart before ours. So we ordered a hot drink and something nice to eat and discussed the upcoming adventure.

Our seats were close to the back of the plane which meant that after priority boarding, we were the first of the rest of the passengers to take our spots. Of course that also meant we were the last off the plane at the other end; complete with periodic notification from the flight crew to slow down our exit as the walkway to the terminal couldn't handle the weight of all the passengers! I figured this had something to do with logging-in via the G2G App as we hit land. We were met as we left the walkway by a wall of police. I had no issues getting logged on. Andrew on the other hand had all sorts of trouble. His G2G wanted to re-log him in with a new identity. But he had already done this. The cop immediately on hand couldn't deal with this situation and sent Andrew to a booth manned by a second policeman. The policeman at the booth was also having trouble. As Andrew had already spent several hours with WA Gov Apps and computer programs with no resolutions whilst we were still on boat, this current situation was not helping his mood.

We finally got through that hurdle, found that fellow yachties that we were going to catch up with at the airport were taking a rain check (fair enough they had been flying even longer than we had, and had also come in at the other terminal so immediate logistics were going to be messy) and after getting our bags eventually off the carousel (just about last) we took a taxi to our hotel. We were trying for a bus but it wasn't



obvious where it departed from. A walk around a very abandoned and empty Perth city didn't get us the hoped for afternoon cuppa; the best solution we came up with was some nibbles bought at a convenient store taken back to our room. Dinner was in the hotel opposite, a very nondescript and basic fare, at the equivalent of QLD 2000 (WA is 2 hours behind QLD). We watched a movie at the local time of 2030 whilst getting ready for tomorrow's pickup

STARTING THE TREK

Cape to Cape Track - Day 1

Cape Naturaliste to Yallingup

19th March 2022. Andrew would say it was partially nerves, and he is probably right to some degree, but my last night's disturbed sleep also had to do with other factors. And one of them wasn't the noisy air-conditioner (It was automatic and we couldn't turn it off). I had eaten the potato mass at lunch on the plane (an allergen) because I didn't think I was going to get anything else and didn't want to starve (the scourge of only being partially able to say what you are allergic to in the food choices of your Frequent Flyer profile) and we wouldn't have got anything else if we hadn't asked for a diet coke. The accompanying rice crackers had wheat in them but I suspect only minor amounts. No, I guess my disturbed sleep was a combination of the spuds, caffeine, sugar (the hostesses handed out chocolates toward the end of the flight) and the nerves.

I got up at around 0510. The alarm was due to go at 0530. The city outside was quiet, but given he lack of people we saw yesterday that wasn't surprising. And today was Saturday.

We managed to get to the restaurant for breakfast across the road a minute or so before the barrier was open, but after taking 'our' seat at the window (the same one we sat at last night) we managed a mainly protein and (apart from some fruit yoghurt) a mainly hot meal.

We were back in our room with plenty of time to spare before pickup so we watched a Kiwi Fishing show

and an Aussie 4wd show on tv before heading to the foyer to meet the tour group. The foyer however was completely empty. Even the reception staff were hidden in their offices. With only ten minutes to go we wondered why. Andrew stuck his nose outside and found the tour bus and several people milling around the driver - who was busy handing tags out and organising luggage. I wonder if they would have come looking for us had we stayed where we were told to go?

It was a full group, which eventually would split into two groups, and masks were necessary (still mandatory I think) on the bus.

After several hours and a cafe stop we were at Cape Naturaliste around 1200. We were handed our lunch and 'something nice,' and given the day's walking briefing. For some reason, because I was probably too busy chatting, I didn't take note of the exact time we started, which is unusual for me. My plan of taking an hourly photo, like I had done on the other big walks recently, was shot out the window as well. I knew I couldn't stop all the time for photos, this would put me way behind the group, but managed a few. I still ended up mainly at the back, which gave me the advantage of having the new guide for company

As per the itinerary, lunch was had sitting on boulders



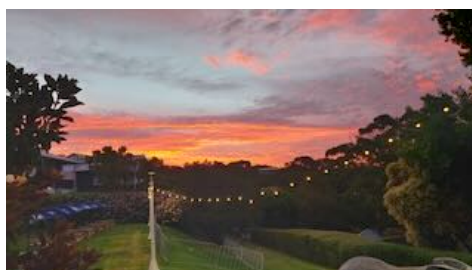
overlooking Sugarloaf Rock, with another stop and a geography lesson at the start of Three Bears Beach. Surfers were abundant along the coast, surprisingly some of 'some age', and some isolated in the middle of long stretches of cliff, and we wondered what they were really doing out there. Surfing is clearly an addiction in this part of the world and people will go to great lengths, and distances, to get their preferred waves.

I had started the walk with a hamstring niggles which has been annoying me for the past few days. It wasn't too bad, the main issue ending the walk today however, was a back of ankle, high-up, shoe-rubbing, issue.

I would have loved to stick around the last beach to watch the sun go down. The yellow orb was trying to poke its way through translucent grey as we were walking the last part of the beach, and occasionally you would get a wet yellow reflection where the waves receded from the shore. We were however driven to the Caves House for dinner, the local, and packed, and way-understaffed, pub.

It took around 30 minutes to get a drink - which is just ridiculous!. I don't remember it being this bad last time we were here - just after completing our 88km section of the Bibb track. Sunset in the background sky was magnificent from the pub grounds but imagine what it would have been like from the beach.

The provided lunch for the day was a chicken wrap. The provided 'afternoon' tea for me (because we started walking late) was a 'gluten free coconut fruit slice', and dinner was a Vietnamese Beef Salad.



Cape to Cape Track - Day 2

Yallingup to Moses Rock

20th March 2022. I wasn't expecting when I took my necklace off last night to have a bath, that I wouldn't be putting it back on again. But this morning after pulling myself out of bed at around 0500 I started the long process of getting ready and discovered after the usual routine of slipping my watch and rings back on, that the clip on my necklace had gone, making it temporarily unwearable.

Being Jag1 meant we had a 0730 pick up (Jag 2 had an 0800 pickup) so we managed a small cereal breakfast plus a more substantial protein component to our morning meal. We even managed to get the dishes done before leaving our room! We started walking back on the track at Yallingup at around 0830, and finished this section at around 1630, completing according to several walkers using distance apps on their phones, around 19km (rather than the 17 noted on the written itinerary). Apparently the section before lunch today is the most likely to wear you out, because of the technical nature of the track (rougher and more likely to trip you up if you don't look where you put your feet) but I found the final dune climb off the beach the hardest, reminding me of the hard section we had done on the Bibb track all those years ago - where we weren't quite taking two steps forward and one step back but it had felt like it. I had at the time ended up in tears. No, I didn't end up on my hands and knees in tears today, and fortunately we are only carrying day packs, (last time it was full heavy packs), and I did eventually get to the top of today's final dune, but given the distance and a few sets of stairs I was still exhausted after today's walk.

The heath along the track started with red and green mosaic hues today instead of the green and yellow mosaic of vegetation that we had yesterday. We did a bit of beach walking, melaleuca forest walking and exposed heath walking along 4wd tracks: these sections are reminiscent of many tracks we have walked in the past. Today we had a group of 9 walkers including us, and one guide. As per yesterday I didn't quite get into the routine of taking one photo per hour. But when I did get around taking photos not all went to plan. I tried to pull out the good camera with the panoramic lens for some fabulously richly coloured geographical beach shots. Pulling the camera out with that lens on is a struggle in itself, it is a very tight fit, but after just one or two shots it stopped working. After my disappointment with the general lens that stopped working before we even got on the plane, you can imagine how I felt! Very frustrated I reverted to the little waterproof camera, forgetting to check the settings. The photos are no where near what I was looking for. At least I can remember the colours - I just can't share a lot of them.

Dinner was back at base; a Moroccan tagine to be reheated in the microwave. I had only just been describing today to a fellow walker that the last time I put food from an organised commercial walking tour in a



microwave I managed to set off the fire alarm in a Hobart City hotel, which included a call out from the fire brigade! Dessert was a sweet middle eastern Love cake - gluten free and dairy free apparently. It was all very nice.

Andrew had bought a bottle of red wine. I had bought some chocolate covered Persian figs to go with it. I didn't know at that time we were getting a Moroccan style meal.

After a soothing shower, we watched the end of the Gold Coast Suns vs West Coast Eagles AFL match and then the 'Kingsman' movie... the original. The television is a good size in this apartment.



Cape to Cape Track - Day 3

Moses Rock to Gracetown

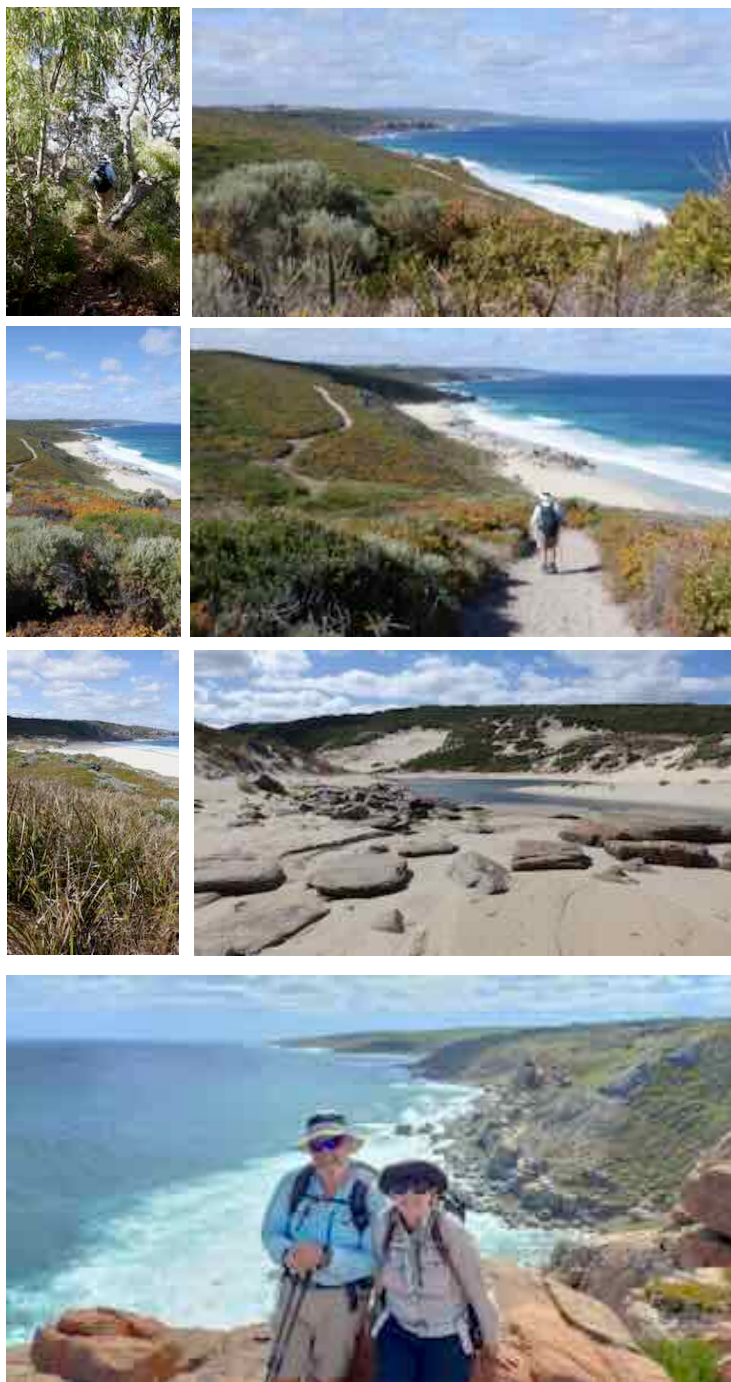
21st March 2022. I woke up with slightly stiff calves, slightly grumpy thighs and sore fronts to both my ankles. The two former issues I could stretch out. The latter I was just going to have to deal with; an anti inflammatory tablet at the start of the day I hoped would help.

The mosaic colours of the heathy vegetation were again different today; they were back to greens and yellows.

Each day had a theme for the interpreters to impart their knowledge. Today's theme was plants. I haven't yet worked out whether each guide has their own little specific sections of the trail, or whether they are up to speed on the information imparted along the whole track, making them more flexible depending on the number of groups running and staff shortages. Of course we had our main allocated guide today but we also had the newby guide that we had had on Day 1. He just happens to be a plant guru!

The terrain today was beaches and cliff tops and wasn't too taxing; the last section a rock hop down a cliff face into Gracetown. Some people went for a short afternoon swim at the end of the walk - but Andrew and I just took our boots off and dabbled our feet. It was comical that a few of those brave enough to enter the water mentioned it was a tad cold; we've come from Queensland - the water to us was freezing!

It was today that we realised that Jag 2 was a fast group. We weren't exactly slow but the second group kept catching up. Okay for them, a bit frustrating for me. I wondered how much of the track they were actually appreciating.



Andrew and I tried to get a bird list going but the only confirmed sighting given our speed and the time of day was a white-browed scrub wren. We may have been struggling anyway. Apparently the wrens we heard in the heath were most likely blue wrens (but emu wrens were not unknown here) but they are different blue wrens to those on the east coast!

We started on the track at 0830. We finished back at the pick up area at 1600. There was a late afternoon visit to a local winery with the obligatory wine and local produce tasting, and

of course purchases should one be so inclined. Most of Jag 1 tended to keep to themselves once they got back to the accommodation base, apparently (as we were off site we didn't get to socialise anyway). Jag 2 was a lot more social and we joined Jag 2 and a couple of Jag 1 participants to celebrate a Jag 2 birthday. I mean. when there is cake.....

Finally back in our room, on the adjacent property and nowhere near the other walkers, we had a quiet night. I fudged through the tv channels, my brain couldn't handle anything else - I didn't have the energy. Andrew watched motor racing on the tablet.



Cape to Cape Track - Day 4 *Gracetown to Gnarabup*

22nd March 2022. There was a mutiny in the offing this morning. We almost didn't start where we had left off. The bus drove us back to Gracetown and headed up the hill to the carpark at the end of the road to both pick up today's guide and drop us off where the track headed back out into the bush. Hang on! What was going on here? We had ended yesterday's walk at the opposite end of Gracetown, where some had had their swim. Why weren't we starting where we had left off? So, the driver turned the bus around and drove us back down the hill to start where we had left off. Of course this meant that we had an uphill pavement section as our first steps. It also meant that the first thing we did when we got back to the top car park was take advantage of the toilet facilities and have a chat to Jag 2, who had got out of their bus at the itinerised starting point.

This insistence on starting where we had finished off got us the nickname by some of the guides as 'every steppers.' Apparently it is a common label!

Today we were walking back into our accommodation. We are also crossing the official halfway mark of the length of the Cape To Cape Track - whatever that specifically means depending on the official distance of the day, but it is apparently along the beach where the Margaret River meets the ocean.

Today's 20 kilometres (ish) travelled through greens and yellows again, knee to waist high heath, to heath and scrub around two meters tall. There was also a forest stint; a nice change to the coastal scenery. We briefly visited Ellensbrook (National Trust property only open to the public on Saturdays) and walked through various forest heath and coastal terrains.

Two snakes were spotted today - a python in the forest and a dugai on rocks along the beach (I saw the first snake but was too late to see the second). We were back in our room around 1600. We had lagged a bit behind right at the end of the day, predominantly because I got fellow walkers to take a photo of us with the Margaret River/Ocean confluence in the background, after the rest of the group had left the afternoon tea spot. My photographers had been quick enough to catch up with the rest of the group whilst I was still putting my pack on. Further up the hill, at the public parking area, another newby guide was waiting for us. We put a bit of effort into increasing our speed but around ten minutes after this I turned to see I was ahead of the guide. A foot injury had slowed her down so for once I was slowing for someone else. The three of us strolled into the resort area sometime later; Andrew and I dropped off at our accommodation, the newby guide continuing to the main staging area to let the main guide know we were ok and back in one piece.





Dinner was at 1800 at the main accommodation area (we were the only ones not staying there) where the caterers put on a fish bbq. Standard sized tables were vaguely set out but our group decided we would prefer to sit together and rearranged the furniture into one long dining area. We started our meal once we finally got one straggler out of her room to join us.



Cape To Cape Track - Day 5 *Gnarabup to Boranup Forest*

23rd March 2022. Today was the longest day on the track. I think the highlight of today for most people was the surprise morning tea of scones and jam at a popular surfers car park. We officially had had our morning tea (the usual sweet treat) given to us - we weren't expecting a guide waiting for us with fresh scones. Of course I didn't get scones, I got some sticky sweet coconut and berry slice - which was lovely but was a hindrance when trying to pull the lone peppermint tea bag out from the teabag container with one hand, its tag and line impossibly wrapped around every other teabag in the container. In the end F and I managed by breaking the tea bag off its tag altogether. Most of the other walkers had freshly brewed coffee!

The 'every steppers' were at it again this morning. Most of Jag 1 (minus us as we were a little behind) had yesterday decided that instead of getting a lift up to the access point to the track at the back of the suburbs, that they would walk to it instead. This meant we covered more of the track but as the first bit was uphill and I was trying to keep up the fast pace initially, I ended up giving myself a stitch. I also had to stop and get Andrew to patch up my big toe. A very small, and almost out of

the way, blister had started to develop on the underside of my right little toe yesterday, so this morning we taped it up. Of course by doing that the dynamics of the foot to the available room in the toe box of my right shoe had changed, and now the slightly wider foot was pushing the big toe into the inside of the shoe. I needed to patch this up before it gave me an unnecessary blister on the big toe as well.

Today's hike consisted of several different habitats; There was walking through heathland, with associated stories of the local indigenous culture blended in. There was a walk through a valley with more indigenous significance, which ended at a pool of the creek's inlet - where we were all entertained by a foraging cormorant. There was a beach walk or two, and later we were back on the ridge in a shockingly burnt landscape, where some areas had clearly burnt hotter than others. Forlorn animals. were trying to survive with very little vegetation here (a monitor and kangaroo were spotted) and we came across the charred remains of those native animals not so fortunate. We finally descended into a burnt lower forest (which looked like it had got a cooler burn). This was the last landscape before being picked up.

This area has only just been opened back up to tourists and our buses are let in by escort only. For those walking from campsite to campsite, it is necessary to skip the still closed allocated camping areas in this burnt out area.



Tonight's dinner was an 'eat in' meal. Another case of using the microwave. It was not obvious what the filler grain was in the 'Gluten Free' meal. I ate some of it before stopping. And apart from a couple of tiny bits of beef the main content of the container was potatoes! (One of my listed allergens! Potatoes give me heart palpitations if I eat too many of them)). The Dessert was soft and sweet and lovely but I found other things to eat to fill in the gaps for leaving the majority of the main meal.



Cape To Cape Track - Day 6

Boranup Forest to Cosy Corner

24th March 2022. Starting back in the burnt Karri forest we followed undulating dirt roads, and original forest industry rail lines, up to the top of the ridge. Xanthorhiza were coming back with a vengeance here after the December 2021 fire. It was then a descent onto the beach that led onto Hamelin Bay. Andrew and I used a 4wd track on the beach to assist us along most of the 7km beach, with mixed success as sometimes the sand was compressed enough to be helpful, and sometimes it wasn't. Others walked closer to the water's edge, which had the advantage of access to the water for those who wanted to swim or walk barefoot, and also the opportunity to see the dead sea slug (? Massive squishy looking creature in the photos that we saw later) that had been washed ashore.

We didn't swim here as it was the mid day break and neither of us are fond of sandy and salty conditions when walking (although there were showers available to rinse off the salt water). However I was jealous at the stories by some walkers that the famous Hamelin Bay sting rays brushed past their legs. What an experience that would have been! We had instead headed straight inland to a table for lunch, but I did manage to check out the stingrays at the old jetty ruins before we left. There were quite a few tourists in the water petting these giant animals.

Three boats were in the harbour; one mono sailing boat and two fishing boats. It would have been interesting to check out who they were, but when I finally got reception (very difficult) they weren't showing up on marinetraffic.com.

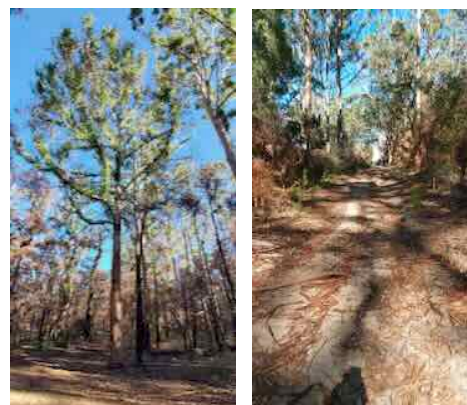
The final leg of today's walk had us going over eight 'moguls', and I wasn't the only one catching my breath. At the highpoint of this section was the Foul Bay Lighthouse.

I made sure I got someone to take a photo of us here. It is not a big lighthouse and not of prominent note. We even had one guide mention that we were the first people he'd seen who were interested in recording our arrival at this lighthouse. But when you like to bag lighthouses....every one counts.

The buses picked us up just south of this on an accessible road (by this stage Jag 2 had caught up).

Dinner was at a local pub. I chose the octopus; it was a little tough and way too citrusy, which played up with my burnt lips. Given the extent of the crustiness on my lips we think the initial injury is a combination of wind burn and sand scouring — not sun burn. The problem is on the lower lip only - the top lip is fine.

Back at base we couldn't find our breakfast supplies but eventually found them back at our room, which Andrew wasn't all that happy about.





Cape to Cape Track - Day 7

Cosy Corner to Cape Leeuwin

25th March 2022. We didn't get a good sleep last night, which wasn't exactly the ideal situation for the last, and apparently by no means easiest, walking day.

We had gone to bed around 2100 but I woke up around 0130. Voices and then music from an apartment around us pervaded our room, and an hour later the same. I had contemplated shutting the bedroom door to block out some noise but feared if Andrew got up in the middle of the night he would not appreciate running into it.

I was surprised to wake up with no calf or thigh muscle niggles. This morning the only item needing first aid was another very small blister developing under the middle toe of the right foot. This meant I ended up with the big toe, middle toe and small toe surrounded by tape.

The frustrating job of the morning was getting the sand out of my right boot.

Jag 1 had again made sure we didn't miss a step and we made sure our guide was with us the extra 50 (ish) meters that is usually skipped between where one section of the trail comes out on the road (end of yesterday's walk) and the trail picks up further along (start of today's walk).

Our big beach walk was 6km today, slightly shorter than yesterday, and fortunately a bit more solid underfoot.

The theme of today was all about 'the journey.' The guide told a story. It was very well done. Part way



during the day the Cape Leeuwin lighthouse was pointed out to us; we could see our end point - or close enough to it. It was a dark square, not a white column, due to the scaffolding erected for its maintenance, and unfortunately by the time we got there we were too late to get to the lighthouse itself.

The buses were waiting for us at the end of the walk. Part way through the day Jag 2 had caught up and our lunch spot had overlapped. Subsequently they weren't that far behind us in the end, with both groups enjoying champagne and nibbles together. I was a bit miffed that I had been put in the 'Gluten Free and Dairy Free' box. The hosts had arrived with large containers full of chocolate covered strawberries, an indulgent looking nougaty sugary substance, and cheese and biscuits. The chocolate covered strawberries and the



nougary sweet were not in the Gluten and Dairy Free much smaller boxes. There were some crackers (looked like rice) and a small container with a square of I don't know what (cheese substitute maybe) but the chocolate covered strawberries had been touted yesterday as a reward with champagne. I pinched them from the big box.

Back at base we had a nice shower and dressed up in something other than hike clothes for dinner. A presentation of photos from the trip for each group was presented to each group. I suspect some of the file footage is old. There were photos of guides I did not recognise. The completion certificate is clearly a tourist thing; ours will probably get recycled. After dinner at the very noisy tavern, (where I was looking for a steak but the best I could do was a burger (without bun and chips) with an extra pattie for \$30), we headed back to our room early. We are not the overly social type, we weren't drinking, and it was a very loud venue - we don't like shouting. It was time to pack up for tomorrow and get ready to head back to Perth.



Back to Perth

26th March 2022. Well the party last night at the tavern was still going at around 2230 and I wondered how we were going to ever get to sleep. The walls seemed thin. Fortunately I did and when I woke up at 0130 all was quiet. I got up around 0520, and swapped some clothes I had washed late last night over from the washing machine to the dryer.

We were ready at 0800 for pickup, after having packed up our gear, and sorted what left-over food we wanted to be returned to the hosts. We commandeered some of the remaining food for breakfast tomorrow. There had been no more sign of the ants which had pervaded my half eaten microwave meal a couple of nights ago (loving the unidentified grain and potatoes) There was however a couple of spiders that I managed to evict - one was on a saucer drying in the dish rack, and one was running around the floor near the front door. Rubbish and recycles were put in the appropriate bins outside and we filled in the remaining 30 minutes before pick up by watching the tv news.

The drive back to Perth was broken by a stop at the Margaret River Saturday Market. I was hoping for something 'souvenir'y' but it was the local farmers market...there wasn't much point us purchasing much as we were flying back to Queensland in two days time. We did however purchase a couple of last indulgent sweets, some strawberries to be consumed over the next couple of days, and a smoothie that was consumed on-site. A 'toilet' stop at a road house was the next stop before two drop-off stops for those walkers who had come from the southern suburbs of Perth. We were eventually deposited outside the Ambassador Hotel where we had been picked-up 8 days before.

Instead of the Ambassador Hotel for our post walk accommodation we had booked the sister property across the road. Our room in the Comfort Inn was much smaller than that in the Ambassador but this one held hot plates and a microwave... but no coffee plunger!

The afternoon was spent relaxing (resting) in front of the tv!



A walk to the park... but not the park we expected

27th March 2022. Because the napkin at last night's dinner had caught and ripped off a bit of scab from my healing lower lip and left it bleeding, my lip looked even worse and darker this morning than it had yesterday. I looked diseased! And it still hurt!

Originally we had planned for today, if it was at all possible, to catch up with a fellow yachtie; a sailor we hadn't seen for four years, since in fact we had last been in the area as part of our circumnavigation of Australia. Unfortunately, due to circumstances outside his control, he still had interstate visitors so that option was off the table. We have other yachtie friends in this area, ironically both live on the same street in a southern suburb, and we had tried to catch up with both of them prior to our walk. Neither catch-up happened and Plan B for them would have been today had we not caught up with the first yachtie. But, mentally we found we just wanted to do something simple and non-taxing. Driving a car from Perth city to beyond Freo and back, and fitting in two visits, although delightful, would have worn us out. So, instead of trying to tee up visiting times, I suggested to Andrew we go out for lunch.

The plan had been to catch a Red Cat Bus (free), do a full loop around the city and then get off centrally to change bus routes to catch a Blue Cat Bus (also free) to Kings Park for lunch. But we didn't actually get the full loop in before we changed our plans,

impromptu-ally jumping off at the Matagarup Bridge to have a look. Matagarup Bridge is the foot bridge that crosses the Swan River to Optus Oval

The bridge was marred in controversy last time we were here, the original contract was for overseas construction and there were cost overruns and delays in delivery. Eventually the bridge was finished off with the help of local manufacturers. An interps board here suggests the bridge is about 400m across and given Andrew had earlier stated he didn't want to do a walk with his black toes, I was surprised he headed across it

He told me later that he had only intended to head across halfway but we ended up crossing the river, encircling the Oval and returning back across the bridge, before getting back on the bus.

During this excursion we had noted people setting up barriers. Upon asking about what the set up was for we discovered it was the Fremantle vs St Kilda AFL match. (There was some conversation on the bus yesterday about two walkers attending a footy match but I hadn't been taking too much notice). We haven't been to a game for close to a decade. As we had no set plans - we thought 'why not.' A staff member reminded us that

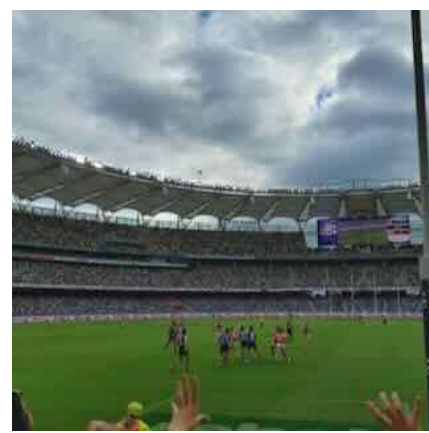


the oval was still only running at half capacity so we didn't know if we could get in. Ticket booths at the ground weren't open yet and we headed off into the ether to TikeTek. From what I could see there were six tickets left. We got two, another Victorian couple ended up next to us with another two, having booked them at approx. the same time.

Tickets booked we got back on the bus and headed into Perth City, having lunch at the Coffee Club, and making a detour for a shop for nibbles at Woolworths for during game time. Then we headed back to the ground.

We were around 1.5 hours early! We tried to get into the mood, looking to buy a Program so we could at least check who the players were (a few years ago we could have named just about every player in every team, but not these days), but the vendor couldn't get his pay device working and wouldn't take cash. We left him to it and headed across to wait for the merchandise caravan to open. When in Rome, so to speak! We thought we would buy a Docker's t-shirt each and become one of the crowd. We had the same issue here as we had for the Program vendor, and after another 10 minutes the merchandise caravan hadn't got their vending machine going either. We gave up here as well. Time to skip through the hoops and get into the ground. Masks, logging in, scanning tickets and vaccination checks later we found our seats...right behind the goals...at the opposite end to the Fremantle cheer squad! So were we likely to get the St Kilda Cheer Squad? Perhaps it was just as well we didn't buy a purple top to be in the middle of a sea of red, black and white. Of course we needn't have worried too much, despite a couple of very loud, slightly abusive and drinking St Kilda fans (in an alcoholic free zone) most supporters around us were wearing purple.

A net was up pre game to allow for goal practice without the balls going into the stands and potentially getting lost in the growing crowd. That didn't stop all balls going over the top; Andrew ended up throwing two balls back. At 1430 the net came down, at 1440 I took a mark (we were that close) and ten minutes later the



goal kickers stopped practicing The Fremantle Dockers had a dramatic drum accompaniment to the team's entrance, which was a great heart thumper. I thought I had recorded it but I can't find the file on my phone. The St Kilda entrance had the theme song but not the fabulous drum beat. After every Freo goal the music was turned up. After every St Kilda goal there was nothing. The idea of home-ground theatrics is of course to intimidate the opposition: despite an early Freo lead however it didn't work. St Kilda won by 10 points.

At the end of the game we joined the throng exiting the ground and made our way back to the bus stop. We weren't the only ones there but I was the only one to notice the disruption sign; if we wanted a bus in the next forty minutes we would have to walk a block back toward the city. Long story short (after being directed in the wrong direction by locals) we ended up walking the entire distance back to the hotel.

Our dinner consisted of the left over nibbles that we had taken to the game.

A VERY WET HOMECOMING....

28th March 2022. Baa baa black sheep have you any wool...yes sir yes sir three buckets! Full! No wool but plenty of water! Full buckets, full shower sumps and wet floors. And several inches in the bilge, as indicated by the bilge pump going on periodically. I couldn't even mentally contemplate touching the bilge until the next morning but it was bucketing down at 2100 when we got back to boat. Gold Coast Seaway had had 128mm rain since 0900. Twenty minutes later Seaway observations indicated the level was now at 140mm and the rain radar was showing a lot more to come. (The 24 hour total to 0900 the next morning was around 300mm).

After emptying the overflowing buckets the first thing I did was decant my day pack so anything that had got wet inside before I managed to put the rain cover on could start drying out. A cuppa was in order before I was to start on the main clothes bag, which was wet and soggy after being delivered from the plane to the carousel at the Airport Terminal and out the back of the car to the boat.

Dinner was left over scroggin and some mixed nuts. We had had two lunches today because I was under the impression the meal we would get with Qantas was a dinner, not a late lunch. I was wrong.

The morning had started casually but early. I had juggled around the tiny space of a kitchen in the hotel room and boiled the left over eggs and fried the leftover tomatoes and mushrooms from the walk provisions (we had handed back the left over bacon rashers). We had packed up, checked out and walked to the bus stop by 0845. In all the 'Googling' I had done to work out the timing of the bus trip to the airport, the majority of trips were likely to take over an hour. We managed a 'limited express' so we were at the airport in about 30 minutes.

The first task in the terminal building was a sewing job. The strap had ripped off along the stitching at the base of the bag Andrew was going to check in. A needle and some dental floss later (and a cuppa) and we were ready to get rid of our bags and head into the airport proper. More coffee, morning tea and an early lunch filled in the time until we got on the plane. With Andrew in the window seat I amused myself with the entertainment screen opting for a series instead of a feature movie...the only issue with that was the plane landed before the end of the final episode! The final approach into Brisbane was a bit bumpy but we landed safe and well. 'Need A Lift' was waiting for us when we exited the terminal and the drive back to boat was dark and very wet.....

Internal waterfalls in the boat were not what we expected to come back to. It had been a relatively long day and I went to bed after pulling the wet clothes out of the wet bag. Andrew took first shift at decanting the buckets, some of which were filling up at an alarmingly regular rate. I relieved him at 0330 on the 29th March.

So we ended the day on an adrenaline high - for all the wrong reasons! One is supposed to come back from a holiday in a relaxed state..... But I guess you learn to expect the unexpected when you live on a boat

