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# THE LONG JOURNEY

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## Summer edition

*"One's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things" –  
Henry Miller*

### Melvin, Editor

*Avid traveller and history/ knowledge buff*

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*Expert Procurer of fine things and Finance Director at home*

Points of view. That's what we think Henry means. For folks who travel a lot, destinations can be purely physical places. But it does not have to be. Think virtual travel.

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## About this Edition

There has been a little worry over safety in Turkey in recent months. But we'll let you know we had a thoroughly safe time traveling there before. So, let this not stop you getting a bargain at the bazaar!

And how about food and wine. One surely cannot live without it! LOL. And so we share with you what we found while driving around outside of Melbourne.

So, we are back again!

## How's life?

It has been a little quiet on the travel front so far though for work Mel was still away for three weeks. Needless to say this was the opportunity for Suan to tag along...and fabulous to have met with Cliff and Laura again after 17 years!



We've signed up for Jordan and Israel at the end of the year. Soooo looking forward to it. And if luck is on our side we'll get a chance to road trip around Hua Hin in September.

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*This should be fun! Meeting friends from lands  
afar and linking up to share experience!*

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Congratulations to Cheryl on having a baby girl. She sure looks like an easier one to handle than the boy! Remind him to take care of little sis! And to the mini alumni of the big G, hey let's catch up again soon.

Enjoy this edition, first by

## Bargaining hard in Istanbul

Have you ever had the feeling that you are being watched? Well, you can be sure that you are being studied from head to toe when you walk through the maze of shops in the Grand Bazaar of Istanbul.

With more than 4,000 shops, you will have to walk a long time if you want to see them all.

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The maze of shops at the Brand Bazaar

Fortunately you do not have to – since many of them sell the same things.

Here is where some fancy footwork on bargaining will be really useful. Start by assessing the shops. In the main walkway of the bazaar there are numerous jewellery stores. Obviously you are not likely to be able to strike a good deal in such shops with high margins.

If you are just browsing, then this is heaven – as the sheer number of shops give continual photo opportunities. It's just as well that the shop owners do not object your photo taking!



Every other shop sells the same thing!

Be sure of what you want as you browse through the alleys and keep in mind the shops that you have seen the desire merchandise.

In Istanbul, the art of bargaining lies in feigning disinterest. When you are sure of what you want, you cannot reveal your desire for it. Rather, it should be a case of “great if I manage

to get it” – at your price. We have tried the >50% cut off. For example, a rug that was offered at 280 Liras was eventually sold to us at 80 Liras.



Beware suave and persuasive salesmen

Because the salesmen in the bazaar see people from all over the world, they are quite able to read from your body language if you have any interest.

It is okay to strike a conversation even if you have no intention to buy anything. It helps these men keep sane in the course of a long day. That is also one reason they are so friendly to everyone.



Great values can be found

Shopping in the Grand Bazaar of Istanbul can be a gratifying experience. There are so many unique little things you can find and see that there is no need to buy anything.

If you let yourself drift a little out of your comfort zone, you might be able to find that little piece of treasure in this bazaar...

## DID YOU KNOW?

Do you think that Shiraz wine originated in France or ancient Persia? If you like us believe it was France, then you are both right and wrong! Read on to know why!

## MYSTERY OF THE SHIRAZ WINE

Modern Iran does not have a wine culture since 1979 when the Islamic republic was born. However, for thousands of years, wine making was a tradition and it harks back more than 7000 years ago. In the city of Shiraz this wine was brought to its apex in the 14th century.

The modern Syrah wine from France on the other hand appears to have its beginnings in the 13th century when a noble knight was said to have brought some vines of Persian origin to France. The Hermitage winery in the Rhone valley was its birthplace.

*So the age old question: Is Syrah wine derived from Shiraz grapes, as it was in Persia?*

This is an important question for a "yes" means that the Shiraz wine had its origins in Persia.



Today you can see the grape is cultivated all over the world. Did they all originate from the grapes of Shiraz, Iran? Unfortunately, NO.

DNA tests in 1998 (yes that far back) actually confirmed that the Syrah grape is derived from a crossing between two indigenous vines in France. So no genetic connection with the Shiraz grape. Or is it?

Afterall, aren't all grapes derived from the same genome set? How can there be no genetic connections at all? So the debate continues...Do you like red wine? We prefer white wines, so where Syrah originates is not an issue. Is it for you?

So, enjoy your walks through the alleys and make sure that you are able to find your way out!



## Wine and Country

One of the best things to do is to enjoy the wine and great food of Australia. One of the best places in Australia to do this is in the Melbourne area of Victoria. Our road trip to the 12 apostles ended with a drive in the wine regions of Bellarine and Mornington.

The Bellarine region has a large number of vineyards scattered all over the peninsula. Our aim was not to cover all of them, but to selectively drop by in some! Afterall, there is only that much you can drink!

Our first stop was at Scotsman hill, named after the many Scots that settled here. Originally a derelict dairy farm, the new owners decided to try out a totally different form of agriculture - Oenology (that means wine making to the layman)!



Scotsmen Hill vineyard

To have a great combination of food and wine, Jack Rabbit was the place we went to. Overlooking Port Philip bay, the winery is both an excellent wine/food and scenic venue.

The place was so full that it seems not sitting space was available. Quite a number of people were turned away! Lucky for us we found a table!

Today Suan had a combination of the signature house white Chardonnay and grilled pork steak. The strips of pork was succulent and tasted tender and sweet! Washed down with wine, it could only be described as heavenly!

Of course the stop did not conclude with just lunch. We walked away with a couple of bottles as well...





Lunch at Jack Rabbit winery

A couple of stops later (including Bellarine estate vineyard), we got on the ferry to cross over to Sorrento on the Mornington peninsula. This saves us the 200km roundabout to drive through Melbourne. If you are lucky, you might catch a glimpse of dolphins cruising about the bay.

After Ten Tractor winery, we proceeded to visit T'Gallant (a listed to-see place). Sold to Fosters, the estate is large, but it was so crowded with coach tour tourists that we decided to leave for other vineyards first.

But it was not all lost, we stopped at Mock red hill where we managed to buy some apply cider. With a very limited capacity, some ciders were sold out. We could only taste the sample. Better come early the next time!



T'Gallant's vast estate

We started the day driving to Merrick's general store which is owned by a few wineries. One of them, recommended to visit by the store manager is Quealy.

Opened by the same owners who sold T'Gallant away some years back, Quealy is relatively new. However, it does have some good vintages to take home. They are said to be the ones who brought the Pinot Gringo grape to the region. We

prefer white wine, but their Pinot Noir is also said be really good.

Of an interest to most visitors is the fact that there is a resident koala in the lone gum tree in the estate.

Said to have appeared one day from nowhere, the animal has made itself truly at home in the vineyard! During summers, the family even provides the critter a bath to keep the heat at bay!



Quealy's beautiful vines

The Mornington is not only famous for its wines. It also has a great selection of food, being close to a seaport and numerous farms offering fresh produce. We had great meals in a number of restaurants across Mornington, including the Counting house in the namesake town of the peninsula.

Fabulous Gnocchi, duck confit and fresh oysters warmed us up in the cold winter that was the time that we were there.

While we had bought some cider from Mock red hill, there is said to be a lot more specialists on this beverage in the region. The selection is too is large and unfortunately too many to taste in a few short days.



Oysters and seafood galore!

That however was the wine and food part of Victoria. Then there is the country part, where not only do you see the usual scenic sights, you can also have a "taste" of the past too.

Welcome to the world of antiques and collectibles. You will find numerous locations where you can browse and purchase all manner of collectibles - from furniture, paraphernalia and jewellery, to quirky sign boards and silverware.

Alternatively, you can also take nice walks around the beaches and trails along Mornington and Bellarine.

There you have it. The quality of life in Victoria is high, because there is such a mix of food, wine, sports, leisure and hobbies that one can pursue. Enjoy a snapshot of this when you next visit, cause it will be something to treasure when you return home back to the grime!

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## Ancient seat of Pilgrims

Did you know that before Islam came to the Indonesian archipelago, that Hinduism and later Buddhism were the predominant religions?

As the centre of a very old kingdom of Mataram, the region around Yogyakarta is considered the capital of classical Javanese fine art and culture. It is also place where some of the best preserved Hindu and Buddhist monuments can be found in Java.

The influence of Hinduism is said to have already arrived by the 1st century AD via traders, soldiers or missionaries. As these influence increased, political patronage led to the building of large monuments such as Prambanan.



The Trimurti - create, preserve, destroy

The temple complex was dedicated to the Trimurti, expression of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. It is the largest Hindu temple in the country and one of the largest in the region.

We were there on a fine sunny day close to noon time and it was blazing hot. To enter the complex, we had to don batik sarongs (which strangely the locals do not have to).

The guide told us that frequent earthquakes in the past few years had made it difficult to restore the entire temple complex of near 224 temples! In the last one, we were told entire structures toppled over.

Now the restoration has work cut out for them to fit the individual pieces back together like a puzzle!



Posing with the Gods

As with any Hindu temple, there are reliefs carved onto the walls. They all tell stories within the Hindu religion - fears, pleasures etc. Some were downright cheeky!

However, this complex was abandoned in the 10th century and was lost to most people for nearly 1000 years till Stamford Raffles commissioned an expedition.

Today, quite some many parts of the temples have been lost - many stones being pilfered for building material or as garden stones by the colonial Dutch. A lot of looting of the monument took place in the 19th century.

Get to the back of the Trimurti temples, you can pose as if you can reach the tip of the temple like the tower in Pisa!



UNESCO visitors

A switch in scenery is next when you visit Borobudur.



As a Buddhist temple complex, the architecture is quite a bit different. At the time that this complex was built, there was considerable competition between Hinduism and Buddhism, both trying to gain political favor and hence dominance. Where have we heard this before?

The guide told us that it took nearly 75 years to build the complex, spanning 3 generations of craftsmen and laborers. An interesting thing for us is the similarity of the relief carvings on the walls with that of Angkor Wat.

While the reliefs tell about the teachings of the Buddha, the style of carving out the Apsaras seemed very familiar!



Apsara song and dance

We ascended the 3 levels of the temple complex - from normal humans to the level signifying the abode of the gods.

There are 72 Stupa and they are all on the top level of the complex. Each one has a Buddha inside. Below is a picture of one where the dome had been removed. If you can reach and touch the Buddha statue from outside the dome, it is said you will be granted any wish. Nope, we did not make it.

After spending quite a bit of time on the top level, it was time for us to descend back to our own realm - all the time enjoying the bas relief work on the walls.

We noted that there were workers constantly using high powered spray to wash the walls, to remove algae and acid rain falls. Such is the nature of maintaining a historical site - it takes time and effort!

Today, we are told that special works are needed to keep the entire complex from sinking into the ground due to soil erosion and the weight of the stone complex.



Stupa without cover

Today, there are still Buddhist rituals being performed at Borobudur. Each year during Vesak day, thousands of pilgrims throng the complex, rendering it almost impossible to visit as a tourist.

You can visit the complex at the break of dawn or during dusk. We prefer mid morning when there is less crowd. Of course, whether you see the sun rise or set depends if the day's cloudy or not. Best time to visit when it is dry, cause the stones can be really slippery.

Do not just shop in the city or go cave tubing when you are in Yogyakarta. So much history beckons to you just an hour from the city. Spend some time here amidst the monuments from 1000 years back and step back from all that material wants for just a little while.



## What's in our next issue?

Ah Machu Picchu. That was an item on our bucket list that we checked off in 2014. Next up, we shall share with you our lovely time there.



Lots of hugs and kisses from the both of us!