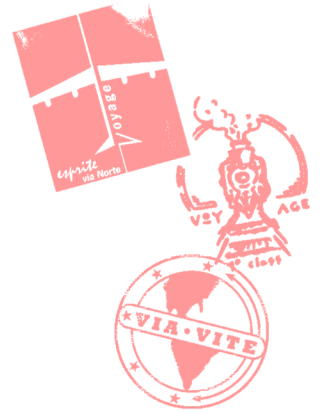


The Spirit of Australia

Exploring the Land Down Under

by Laurie Harris





The Spirit of Australia

Exploring the Land Down Under

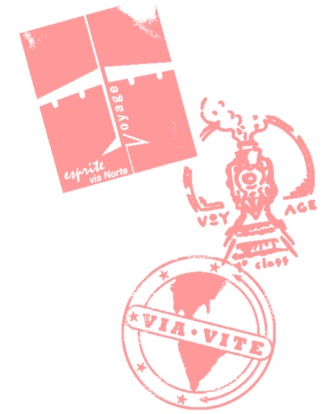


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*Dedicated to my Mom, who always encouraged
me to travel and see the world.*



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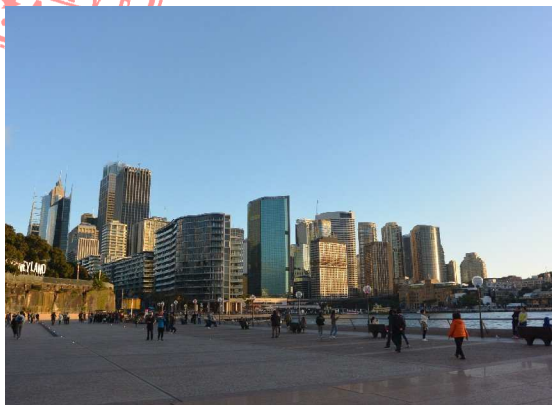
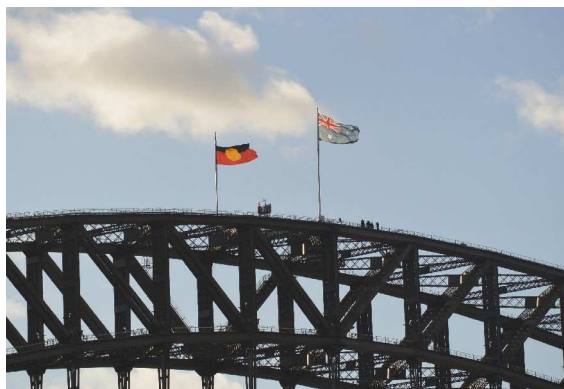
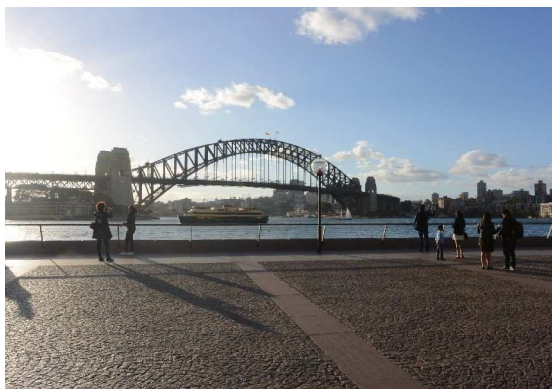
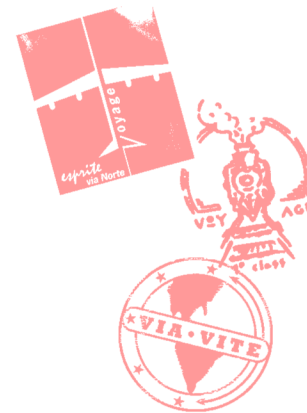
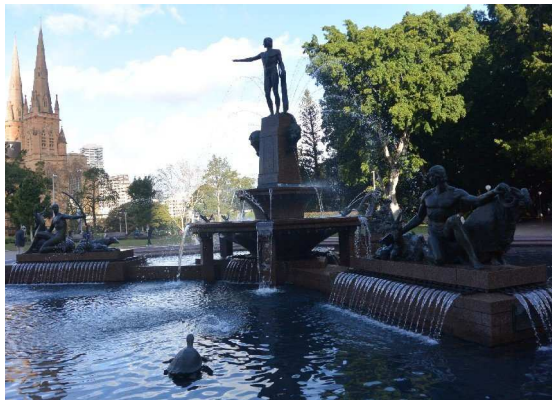
Day 1 - Sydney

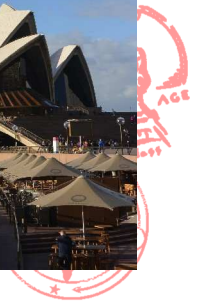
The first day in Sydney marked a significant milestone. This was Laurie's seventh and final continent and Dwayne's sixth continent. We started our time in Sydney by taking a slow walk from our hotel near Darling Harbour up to the iconic Sydney Opera House, taking in Archibald's Fountain and St. Mary's Cathedral along the way.

Once we arrived at the Opera House we explored the area of Circular Quay before taking a tour of the Opera House. At the conclusion of the tour we had a front row seat to the Vivid Festival 2017 which included an elaborate light and video show that encompassed the surface of the Opera House, the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the buildings and ships in the Circular Quay area.

We ended our night with a late night dinner cruise with Captain Cook Cruises. Captain Cook Cruises was also a part of the Vivid Festival with their boat lit up as it cruised from Darling Harbour to Circular Quay.





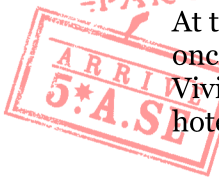




Day 2 - Sydney

Our second day in Sydney began with a half day tour of the wider Sydney area taking us from Mrs. Macquarie's Point overlooking the Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge to Double Bay and the popular Bondi Beach. Our tour took us all the way to South Head, the southern entrance to Sydney Harbour and the nearby MacQuarie Lighthouse. Our city tour ended at Darling Harbour where we boarded a boat for a scenic lunch cruise.

Following the lunch cruise we made our way to the Sydney Harbour Bridge to take part in the Sydney Harbour Bridge Climb at twilight. We enjoyed stunning panoramic views of Sydney while learning the history of the building of the bridge. At the conclusion of the climb we were once again witness to the splendor of the Vivid Festival while walking back to our hotel.













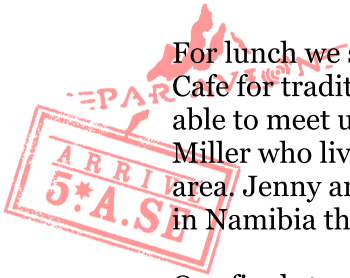
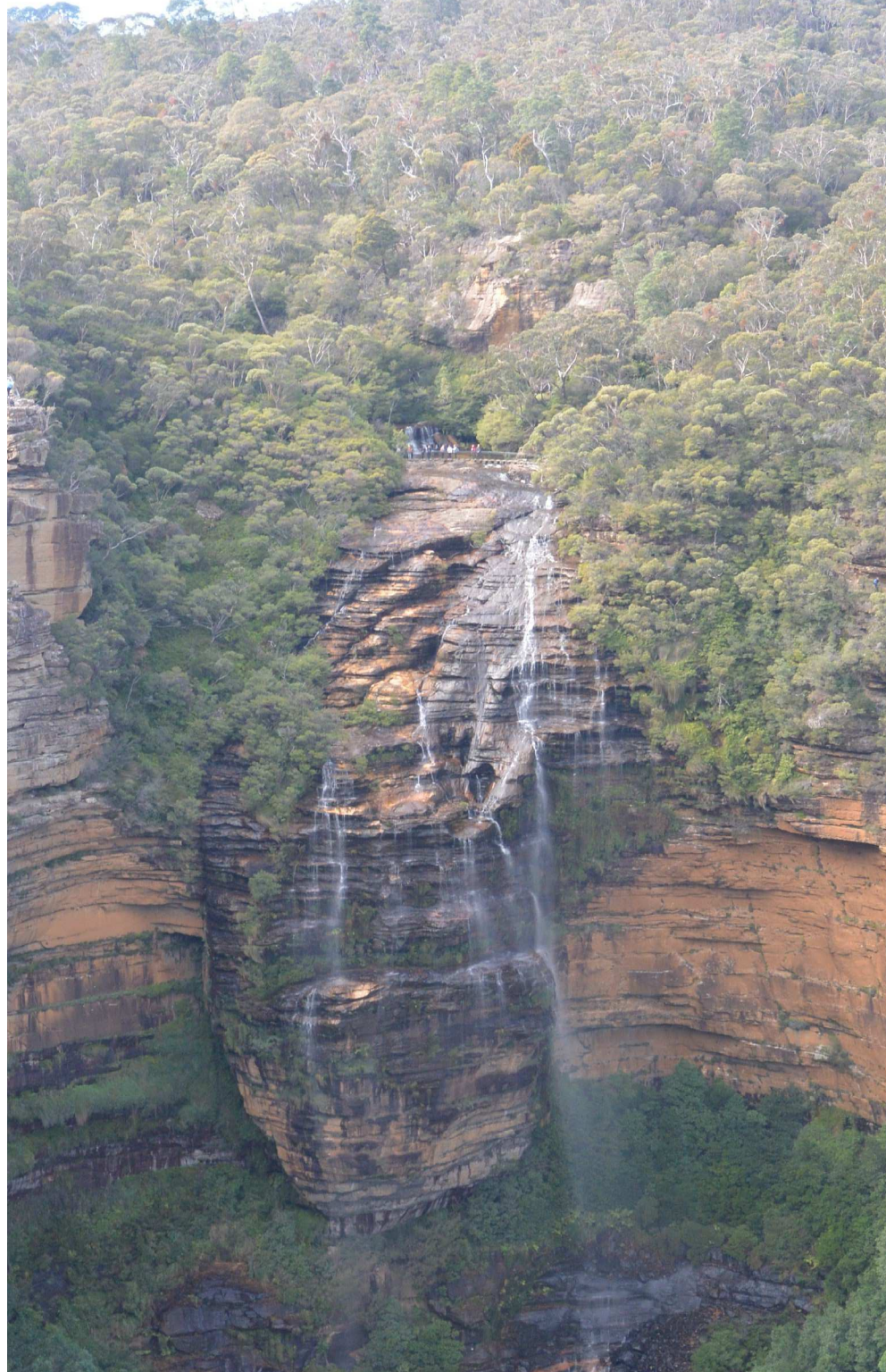
Day 3 - Blue Mountains

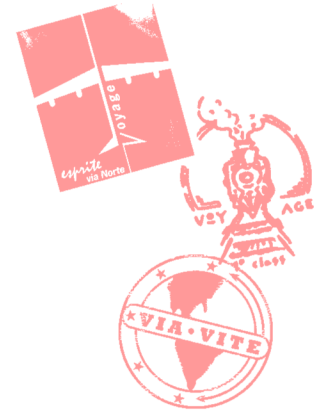
Our final day in Sydney took us on a tour of the Blue Mountains region far outside of Sydney. Before reaching the area, we first stopped at the Featherdale Wildlife Park. Our pre-opening admission allowed us a non-crowded view of koalas, wombats, fairy penguins, cassowaries, wallabies, kangaroos, dingoes and salt water crocodiles.

Continuing on to the Blue Mountains we took in multiple scenic vistas from Wentworth Lookout, Govetts Leap with its waterfall views and Eaglehawk Lookout with its views of the 3 Sisters rock formation.

For lunch we stopped at the Boiler House Cafe for traditional Australian fare. I was able to meet up with my friend Jenny Miller who lives in the Blue Mountains area. Jenny and I had travelled together in Namibia the previous year.

Our final stop was the Mt. Tomah Botanic Gardens with its wide assortment of native plants and flowers.

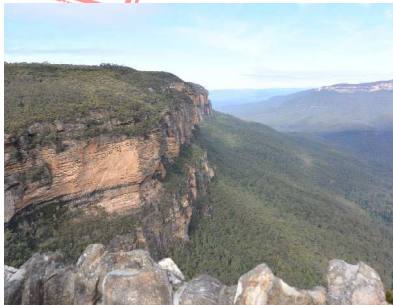


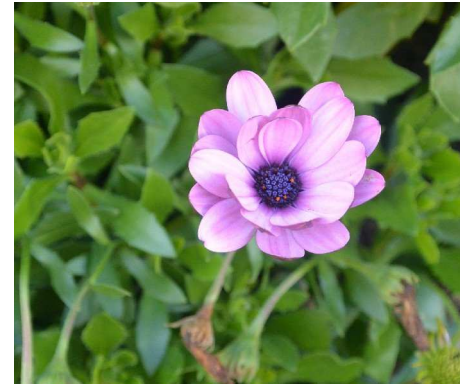






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Pool
Hours 7.00am - 9.00pm

Conditions of entry

-  This pool is only to be used by residents and guests.
-  All children are to be accompanied by an adult.
-  Management reserves the right to remove from the premises any individual displaying the effects of intoxication.
-  No glasses or bottles in the pool area.
-  No smoking in the pool area.

PULLMAN Palm Cove Sea Temple Resort & Spa

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Day 4 - Cairns

We next flew to Australia's northern coast where the temperatures were much higher in this tropical environment in comparison to Sydney. We stayed at the upscale Pullman Palm Cove Sea Temple resort in the Palm Cove area just outside of Cairns.



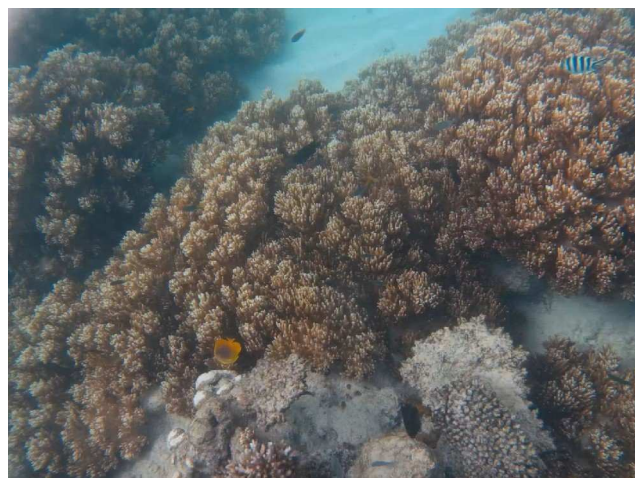


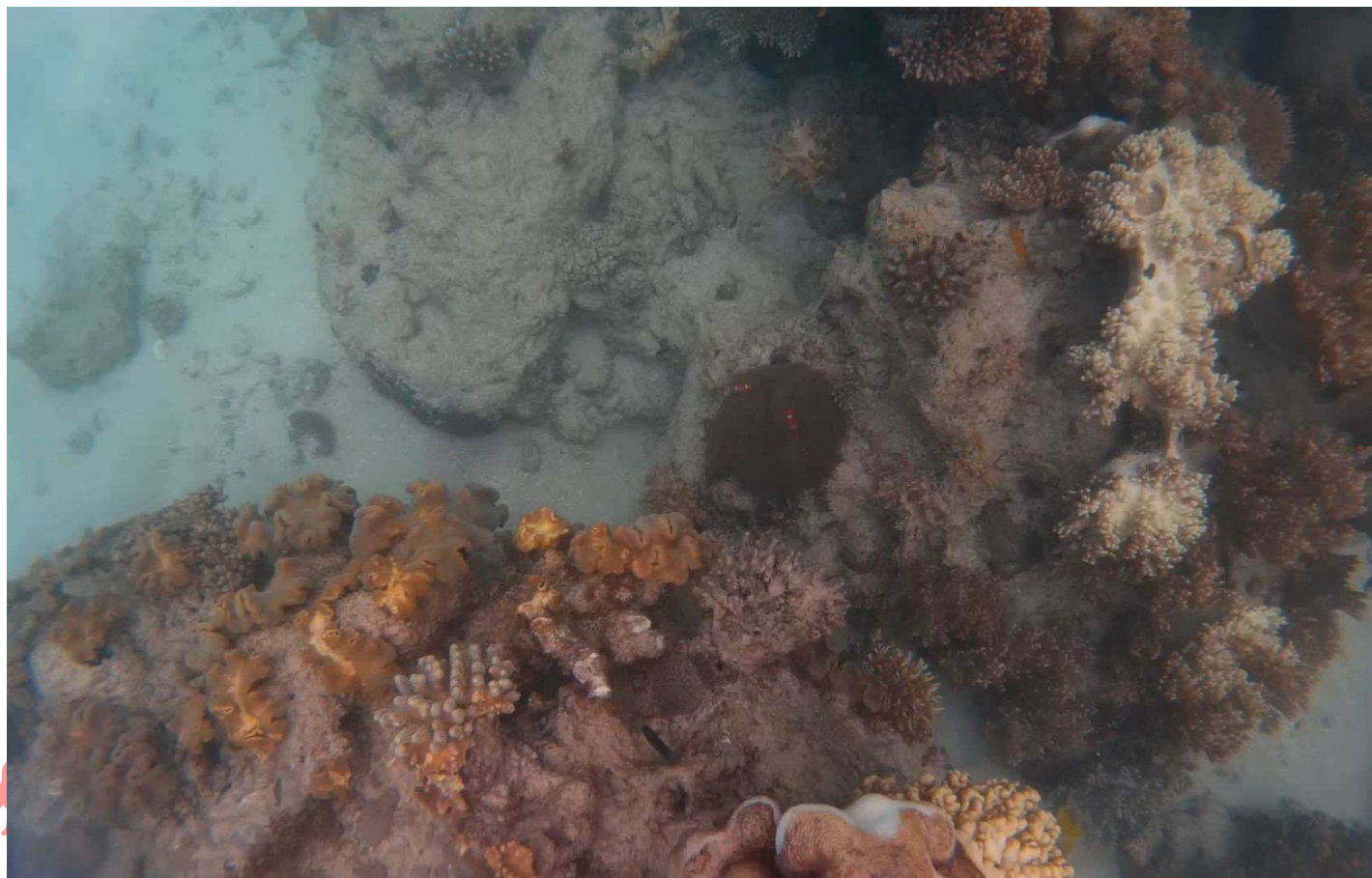
Day 5 - Great Barrier Reef

Our first day in Cairns took us aboard the Ocean Freedom on an unforgettable trip to the Great Barrier Reef. Although Cairns is in the tropical region, the winter season meant slightly cooler temperatures and a rough boat ride before reaching the reef. The plus side is that there was no danger from marine stingers such as box jellyfish and irukandji. The rough seas did mean a change in stops with the omission of the Wonder Wall stop and no glass bottom boat tour.

Dwayne and I did get a chance to snorkel at Upolu Cay, a small sandbar that is briefly exposed at low tide. We were able to see numerous tropical fish and coral formations including parrot fish, clown fish, a stingray and "Barry" the barracuda. This marked our first time swimming in the Pacific Ocean.









Day 6 - Daintree National Park

Our final day in Cairns took us far north of Cairns to the Daintree National Park and Cape Tribulation courtesy of Billy Tea Safaris. After a morning tea break we took a river cruise spotting many salt water crocodiles along the banks. After rejoining our 4WD truck we explored the Daintree National Park via an elevated boardwalk.

For lunch we enjoyed a BBQ consisting of steak, salad and snags (sausages) at a roadside motel. The motel had as assortment of animals onsite including wallabies, parrots and pythons.

After lunch we journeyed to Emmagen Creek where we dined on traditional "bush tucker" such as billy tea and damper along with various local fruit. On the drive back we stopped at the Daintree Ice Cream Company to sample some of their exotic homemade fruit flavored ice cream made from their extensive orchards. The daily sampler included soursop, wattle seed and mango/passion fruit flavored ice cream.





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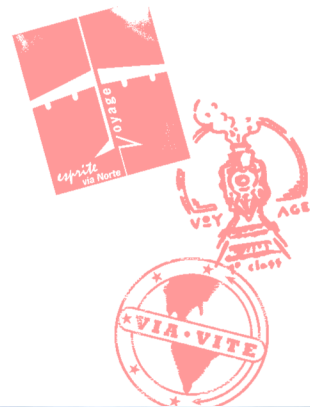






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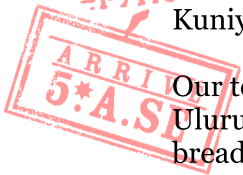
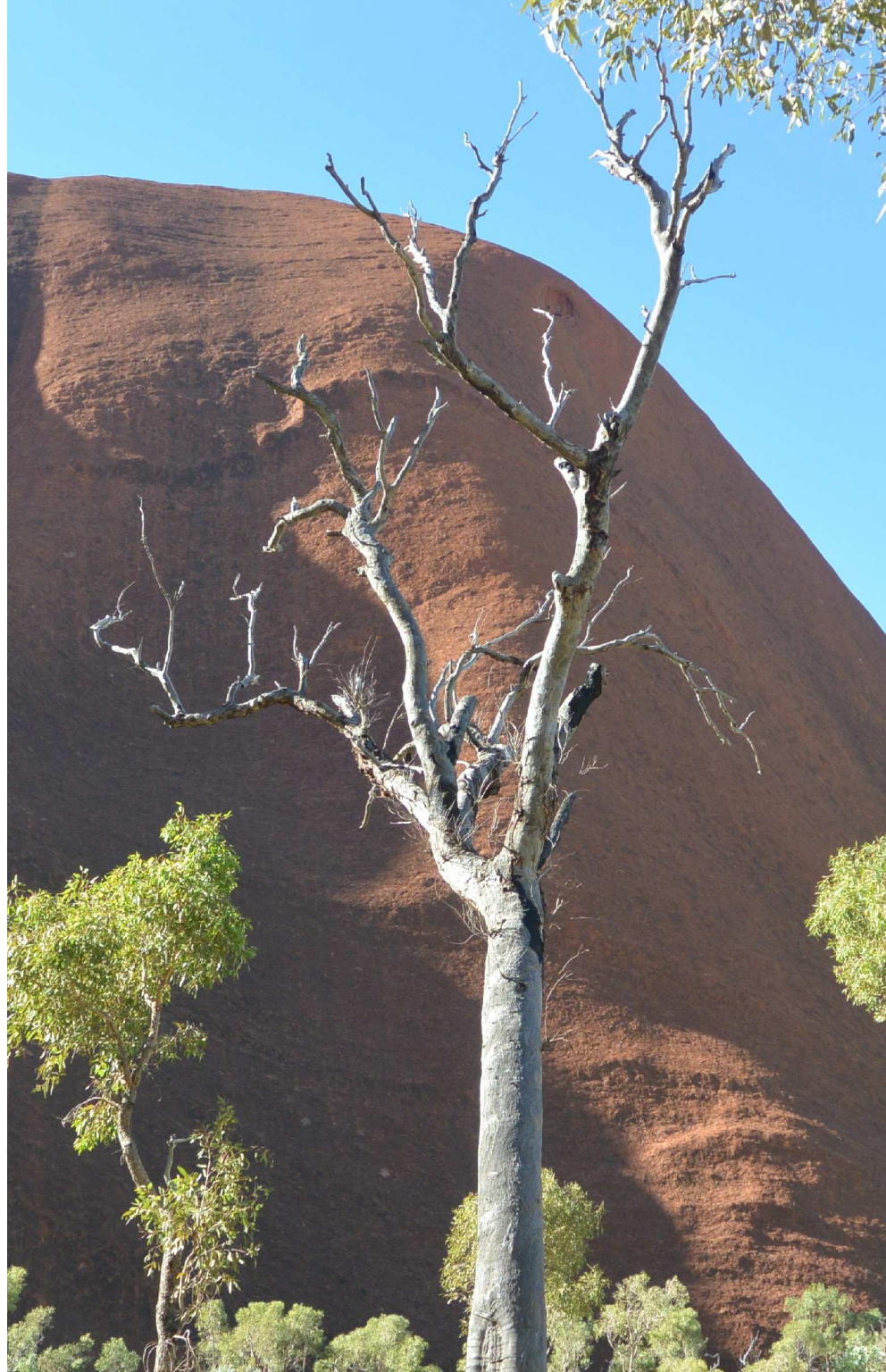


Day 7 - Uluru

Our next stop took us to Australia's Red Center and a site sacred to the local Anangu people - Uluru or Ayers Rock. Along with the Sydney Opera House, Uluru is one of the most iconic landmarks of Australia.

Late in the afternoon we took a tour of Uluru, encircling this massive sandstone "island mountain". Along with the unique rock formations and waterholes, the rock formation consists of caves set aside for specific purposes of the Anangu people such as the family cave, the teaching cave, the men's cave and the old people's cave. These caves are marked by instructive rock carvings and paintings. Our guide told us some of the sacred "Dreaming" stories such as the creation of Liru and Kuniya.

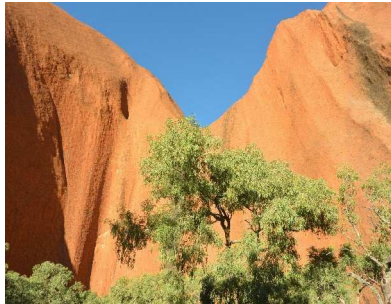
Our tour ended with a sunset viewing of Uluru while sipping on champagne and bread.

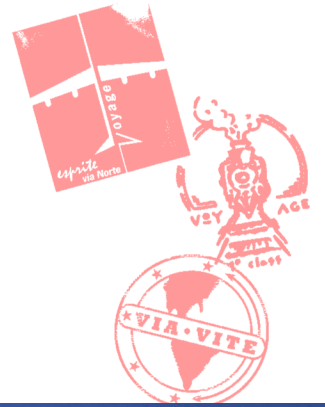




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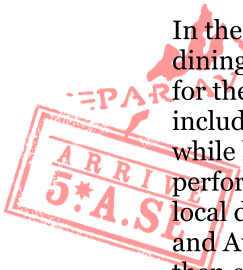
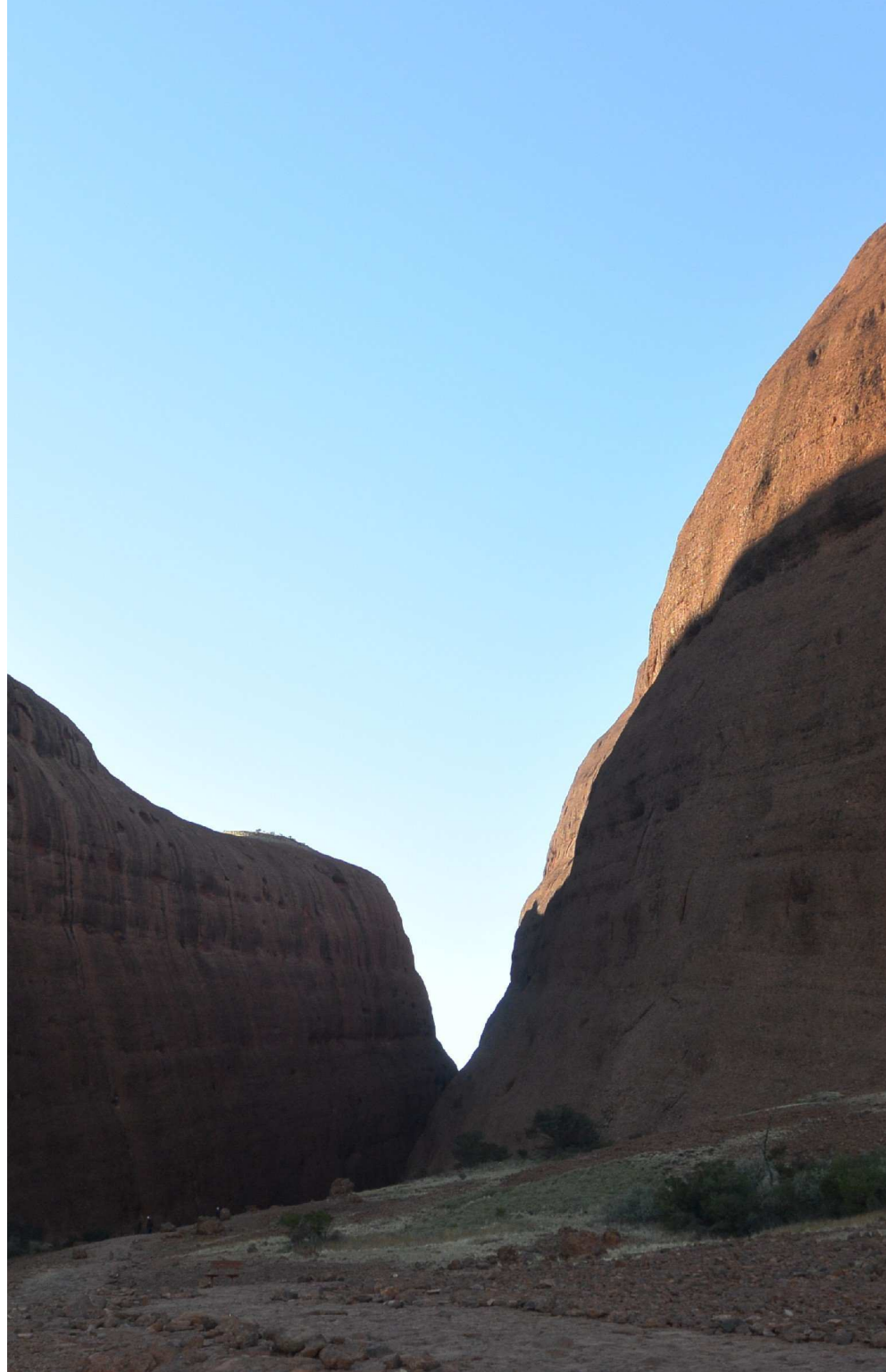
Day 8 - Kata Tjuta

Our next tour took us to the other main attraction of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park - Kata Tjuta or the Olgas. Like Uluru this site is also sacred to the local Anangu.

We began our tour very early in the morning in order to capture the sunrise over Uluru and Kata Tjuta. After sunrise we settled in for an outback breakfast.

After breakfast we ventured into Walpa Gorge or Windy Gorge for a hike. The low morning winter desert temperatures and strong winds blowing through Walpa Gorge made for a very cold hike. Our guide described some of the geologic formations that make up this rock formation.

In the evening we travelled to an open air dining area in view of Uluru and Kata Tjuta for the "Sounds of Silence" dinner. Appetizers included samples of kangaroo and crocodile while listening to a local didgeridoo artist perform as the sun set. Dinner included more local delicacies including barramundi, emu and Aussie desserts. A resident astronomer then concluded the evening with a description of the overhead star formations and some of the Aboriginal stories of the stars.





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Trans to City

Day 9 - Melbourne

Our final stop on the tour was Australia's trendy city Melbourne. Melbourne is a very modern city and spiritual home to Australia's two key sports - cricket and Australian rules football. We stayed at a hotel in the heart of Melbourne's Chinatown.

After spending the afternoon shopping for cricket gear we arrived for dinner at the unique Colonial Tramcar Restaurant. Unfortunately our tramcar broke down scuttling our plans for this unique dining experience.



*Welcome to
Penguin Parade*



**We hope you enjoy this award winning
natural wildlife experience**

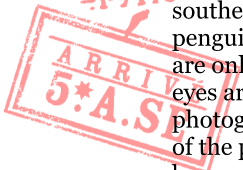
Day 10 - Phillip Island

Our final day in Melbourne took us to Phillip Island far to the south of Melbourne. After the long drive we first stopped off at the Churchill Island Visitor Centre for some tea and scones. The nearby Churchill Island is home to a herd of the notably shaggy Highland cattle.

Phillip Island is home to a number of bird species including black swans, pelicans, cape barren geese and purple swamp hens. After tea we headed to the Koala Conservation Centre for a view of some of the protected koalas. The raised boardwalks allowed us to walk among the treetops close to the mostly snoozing koalas.

A trip by the Phillip Island Raceway gave us an up close view of a large number of Eastern Grey Kangaroos owned by the caretaker of the raceway.

As the sun set we headed to the main attraction of Phillip Island, the award winning Penguin Parade. The little penguin or fairy penguin is the smallest penguin in the world. They are only found on the southern coast of Australia and New Zealand. The penguins spend large amounts of time at sea and are only active during the night. As a result their eyes are extremely sensitive to bright lights so all photography is prohibited. After sunset a number of the penguins will return to their underground burrows on Phillip Island. We witnessed scores of the penguins in their trek from the coast to their burrows in the surrounding hillside.







SYDNEYLAND

WELCOME TO GADIGAL LAND

The Sydney Opera House stands on Tullagunnah, the land of the Gadigal clan. Honouring Aboriginal precedent, we warmly acknowledge the Custodians of Gadigal Country and pay respects.

A Welcome to Country is a customary greeting that our First Peoples extend to visitors who in turn agree to respect the traditional laws and culture of country.

Welcome to Gadigal Country.

STOP

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Day 11 - Sydney

On our final day in Australia we explored a bit more of Sydney. We began our day by walking across Sydney Harbour Bridge to northern Sydney for lunch at Stir Crazy Thai restaurant. We were able to browse a local arts market setup beneath one of the arches of the bridge.

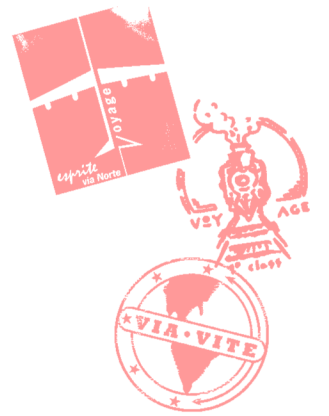
On the walk back we went to the top of one of the Sydney Harbour Bridge pylons for a panoramic view of downtown Sydney and Circular Quay.

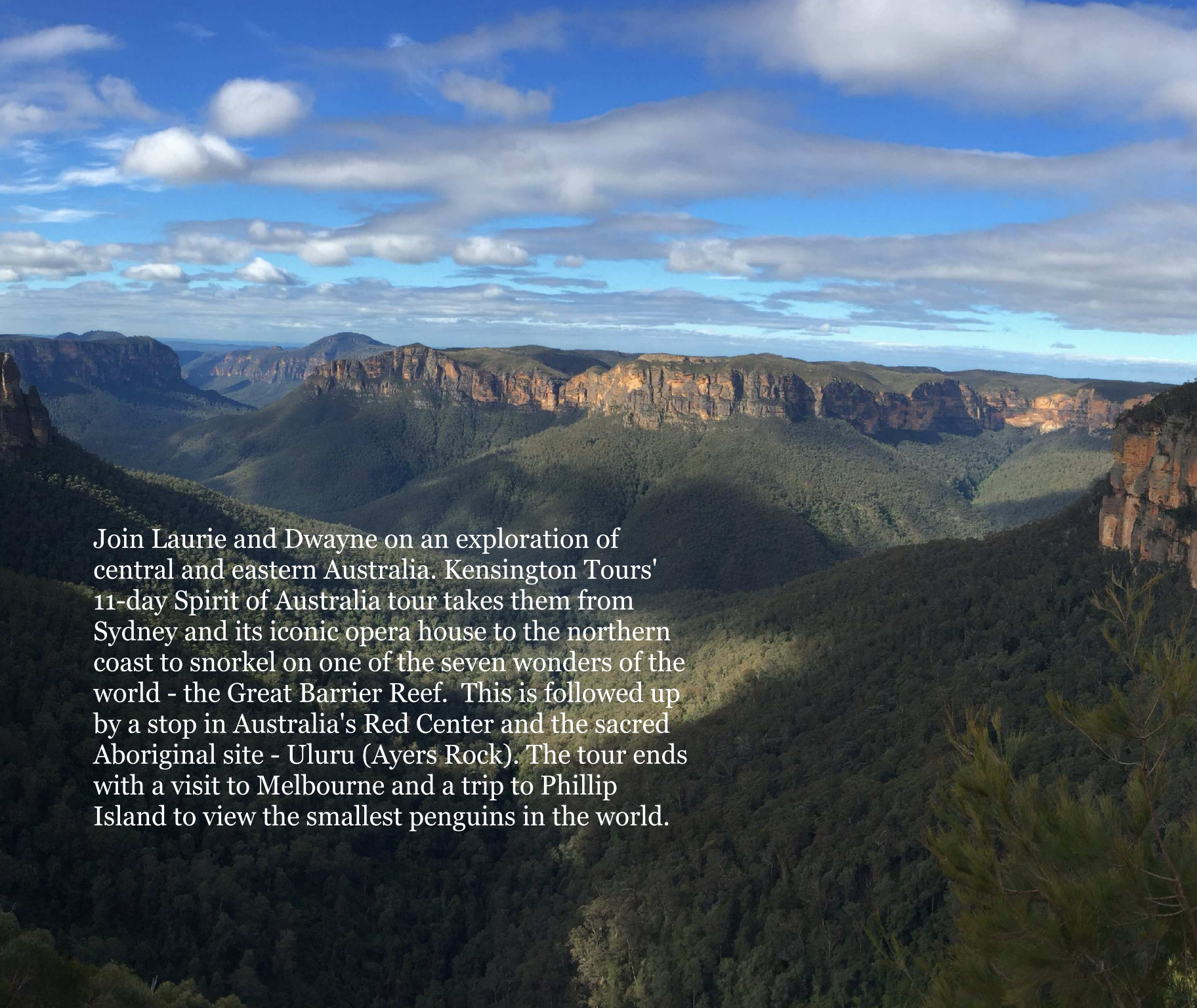
We ended our time in Sydney from atop Sydney's highest point, the Sydney Tower Eye. From this twilight vista we could see all of Sydney as well as the lights from the ongoing Vivid festival.











Join Laurie and Dwayne on an exploration of central and eastern Australia. Kensington Tours' 11-day Spirit of Australia tour takes them from Sydney and its iconic opera house to the northern coast to snorkel on one of the seven wonders of the world - the Great Barrier Reef. This is followed up by a stop in Australia's Red Center and the sacred Aboriginal site - Uluru (Ayers Rock). The tour ends with a visit to Melbourne and a trip to Phillip Island to view the smallest penguins in the world.