

A Feeling Of Peace, Orderliness in Sydney

By Patricia Arrigoni

SYDNEY, Australia – Joan Long, scriptwriter of the successful movie “Caddie,” wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that “Australian films have done more for Australian prestige abroad than any other information source.

Indeed, many travel agents say the movies “Breaker Morant,” “Picnic at Hanging Rock,” “the Last Wave,” “My Brilliant Career,” “Gallipoli,” “Man from Snowy River,” and “Phar-lap” must be credited with the increasing interest in travel to Australia.

Australia is the country down under, where winter is summer and spring is fall. People head for the beaches in January and February in temperatures ranging from 80 to 104 degrees.

Sydney, with three million inhabitants, is situated on the east coast. Spread out over 670 square miles, this modern city creates a feeling of peace and orderliness. It is safe to walk anywhere.

Sydney is famous for its magnificent harbor. Blue sparkling water, stretching almost as far as you can see, is churned by colorful sailboats, picturesque white ferry boats, hydrofoils, yachts, tankers, pleasure craft of all types, military cruisers, and luxury liners. Add to this the endless panorama of water-related activities such as wind surfers, swimmers, water skiers, people boarding and disembarking from the ferries, and you have an enlivening and entertaining spectacle.

Covering a shoreline of 150 miles, Sydney Harbour contains 66 bays and 15 coves along with 34 golden sandy beaches, all within the city limits. White-topped waves wash gently up along the shores of luxurious homes, foreign embassies, public parks, buildings and the renowned Sydney Opera House.

A good way to get acquainted with Sydney is to take one of the Captain Cook cruises. There are “coffee cruises,” river cruises, luncheon cruises, and a candlelight dinner cruise. They travel past the Opera House, the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Rocks, Government House, Admiralty House, Fort Denison, Taronga Park Zoo, Balmoral Naval Base, Quarantine Station, the Split Bridge and Gladesville Bridge.

The Opera House, called by the *London Times* “the building of the century,” contains more than 900 rooms with four main theaters: the Concert Hall, the Opera Theater, the Drama theater and the Cinema.

There are also a recording hall, an exhibition hall, a reception hall, five rehearsal studios, two restaurants and a coffee bar, six theater bars, six foyer/lounge areas, sixty dressing rooms and a library.

The complex is situated on Bennelong Point, a peninsula of 5 ½ acres on Sydney Harbour. Three sides are surrounded by water; the fourth by green lawns and trees.

Its beginning occurred in 1957 when a group of Sydney citizens decided to build a performing arts center. Danish architect Joern Utzon won an international design competition for his “sails-along-harbour” design. The estimated budget was \$7.2 million dollars.

By the time England’s Queen Elizabeth cut the blue ribbon some 16 years later on October 20, 1973, the cost totaled \$102 million. Joern Utzon had resigned, the project had been plagued by strikes, and a murder had occurred over a winning lottery ticket.

Today the shimmering white shells of the Opera House look like billowing sails ready to set out to sea. The shell clusters are covered with a gleaming skin of more than one million buff and white ceramic tiles made in Sweden.

Sydney was not always so sophisticated. It contains the only society to develop from a penal colony. Captain James Cook sailed into Botany Bay on April 29, 1770 and laid claim to the entire eastern seaboard, giving the British government a new dumping ground for convicts.

Deportation for prostitutes, poachers, pickpockets, Irish rebels, cardsharps, trade union organizers and others began with the arrival of 11 ships in January 1788. Within three years there were 4,000 people living in the colony, and the settlement was known for scurvy and starvation.

Today these same convicts, soldiers and settlers are honored in a three-sided sculpture called “First Impressions” at the Rocks Square, a major redevelopment and restoration project.

The Rocks, an area seen on the harbor cruise, was once frequented by sailors, prostitutes and criminals. It has been restored into a fascinating complex of terrace houses, stores, art galleries, craft centers, and restaurants.

Another site to visit in Sydney is the Taronga Park Zoo, only 12 minutes by ferry from Circular Quay, the main Sydney ferry terminal. You can see the teddy-like koala bears which sleep in eucalyptus trees, kangaroos and platypuses. There is also an interesting rain forest aviary.

Other places include the Royal Botanic Gardens adjacent to the Opera House, the Australian Museum, Parliament House, Centrepont Tower and the Art Gallery.