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Pat and Jim Bryant spent time in Sydney on their trip to Australia.

Australia

THE BRYANTS TRAVEL TO THE SIGHTS OF AUSTRALIA'S WINE COUNTRY

DEPARTING AUCKLAND on the Crystal Serenity we cruised the Tasmania Sea for three days and arrived in Sydney in mid-afternoon. We enjoyed the slow maneuvering through one of the world's most beautiful harbors. My wife and I took a harbor ferry to Manley Beach which is always one of my favorite things to do in Sydney.

We walked around Sydney's inner harbor and then returned to the ship to dine. The next day we took an extensive two-hour harbor tour with a guide and then returned to the ship for a gourmet lunch and set out for Tasmania. After a day and a half, we arrived in Tasmania the Pinot Noir capital of Australia. After we took a driving tour to orient ourselves to the island, we visited Coal Valley Vineyard for an integrated wine pairing with a memorable lunch of mainly salmon and smoked meats.

The stopover in Kangaroo Island was memorable only for the koala sightings in the forest. The next stop was Adelaide which included sightseeing, visits to two wineries plus lunch. The first stop was at Penfolds in Adelaide Hills. This is Australia's most famous winery and one with which I am very familiar. It was started by Dr. Christopher Penfold in 1844 and produces great value wines at different price points.

After a very good tour of the oldest facilities, we sat for a memorable tasting. It included the greatest wine: the 2014 Grange. This wine is always 86-100% Shiraz with the compliment being Cabernet Sauvignon. Universally considered to be Australia's greatest wine, it is probably my favorite wine on earth. It is certainly one of the richest and tastiest wines you will ever find. Although not inexpensive (\$450-\$600 per bottle) it compares very



A koala high up in a tree.

favorably with wines which are more expensive. The Bin 707 which is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon is very great also and until the past decade was relatively affordable, but now is \$350. It is a tremendous wine also, but other Cabernet Sauvignon can favorably compete at this price point or less. Yaltarna is Penfolds greatest Chardonnay and is excellent, but in my opinion does not stand alone

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Kangaroos and koalas were seen on a stopover at Kangaroo Island.

as the quality equivalent in Chardonnay as Grange does to Shiraz. The other wine of note is the Bin 389, also known as "Poor Man's Grange" because the new barrels used for maturing Grange are recycled to mature Bin 389 and supposedly experts can detect a hint of Grange when tasting this alternative and much less expensive wine (\$60).

The most memorable experience of the two-week tour happened after we left the ship in Perth. We had made arrangements to visit my good friend Denis Horgan of Leeuwin Estate Winery in Margaret River. We chartered a private amphibious plane to fly from the Perth harbor southward along the Swan River and the Indian Ocean coast to land on Leeuwin's private runway in Margaret River. Denis and Trish Horgan greeted us as we deplaned and drove us to the winery where we started with a tour of their famous art collection. Each year Leeuwin Estate has a competition among artists to design the current vintage label for the Art Series wines produced. The collection of these was stunning. After the tour we had a fabulous tasting of most of the wines produced in the Art Series and then sat down on the veranda for an unforgettable meal with matching wines. The weather was perfect as were the food and wines. Alas, we had to leave to check in at the Cape Lodge, our home for the next three nights. This great establishment is very close to perfect. We did day trips to see kangaroos and to visit wineries, notably Vasse Felix and Cullen. It was wonderful to see Vanya Cullen and taste the Bordeaux blend named for her mother, Diana Madelaine, as well as the Kevin John Chardonnay named for her father. Both wines were outstanding and some of each came home with us.



Disembarking at Leeuwin Estate Winery.



Wines tasted at Vasse Felix.

The finale of the trip in Australia was lunch at Wills Domaine Winery. Our hostess was a French intern who poured all of the excellent offerings. I specifically asked if there were any “rare” wines not offered and she said we would be able to buy the 2003 Semilion at lunch. The restaurant is rated the best in Western Australia and it was perfect weather outside. We did drink several great wines. The most memorable was the 2003 Semilion which impressed us so much that we bought all the remaining inventory—three cases. What a way to end this great wine experience. *À votre santé!* 🍷

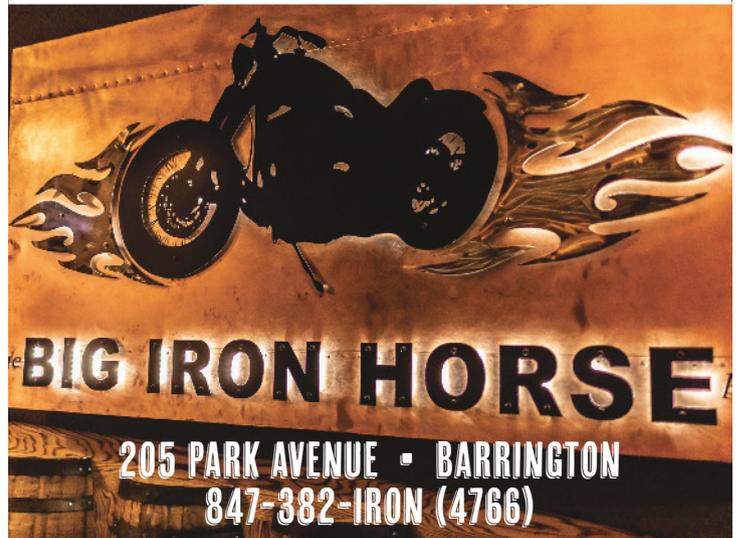


Chester Osbourne, owner and winemaker at d’Arenberg Winery, with Jim Bryant and Joe Steakley. The netting over the grapes protects them from bugs and birds.



PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

Barrington resident Jim Bryant is pursuing his passion and love of wine as an international wine consultant. This follows a 30-year career in senior financial and general management positions at two Fortune 100 companies. Contact him at profwino@comcast.net.



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