

Darramy on tour No 28: Australia and Genoa? Yes that right! August 2016 – March 2017

Ciao,

The Italian is starting to come out! Read on and see how and why we ended up in Italy.

We left you last time in Bundaberg (Queensland). We moved from there to the Southern end of the Great Barrier Reef, and then due to ongoing medical stuff, Gladstone and Curtis Island. We spent time around this area and then proceeded up to the Keppel Islands. Which were pretty, but it took some getting used to the amount of day sailors whom were about and then going home to their marinas at night. It was a different life style, and we were not used to it.



Colourful Keppels

We had booked flights for a visit home in early October, and it was then the end of August, we were wondering what to do, as we had to be able to leave Darramy in a secure place whilst away, and if we headed right up to the north of Queensland, we would not have time to return South before the cyclone season started, so it was a dilemma how to maximise our time.

This dilemma was solved when we found a 4x4 vehicle that had to be relocated from Darwin to Broome 2400kms across the top of OZ. So we thought hmm, that sounds like fun, and since we had not seen that part of the country. We said let's do it.



Crocadoodle Do

very clean and comfortable. We went off one day on a Crocodile trip to see some Salt water Crocodiles in the wild, where as luck would have it, the tour we booked was not the run of the mill touristy trip. The guy that

So we sailed back to Bundaberg, and agreed a long stay in the Marina, flew up to Darwin. Darwin was interesting as it is the capital of the Northern Territories, not a massive town, but



A Snappy Chappie

met us made Crocodile Dundee look like a wimp. We went out onto his small 5 metre boat to



Are you sitting comfortably Sue?

Croc was leaping out of the water right next to us. At least 4 metres long with jaws and teeth exposed to scare the bravest of us. Funny though, two seconds after this Sue moves her seat to the middle of the boat! She said it would be more comfortable there!

An interesting experience and obviously our guide played on it, but he did seem to have a love for these great big reptiles, and gave us a good insight into the world of Crocs. We also proceeded to visit another national park (Oz is full of them) where we were able to swim in lovely pools which were supposed to be Croc free. Then it was onto see Giant Termite mounds. These things were over 5 metres high and an amazing sight, but nothing to get too excited about really!

We went out onto his small 5 metre boat to see a few crocs. Well, there was a metal grill around the outside of the boat, with small holes cut out so you could use a camera. We were told not to lean over the side. We cast off, Sue rushed to take a seat by the side of the metal screen. Motoring along slowly you could see a few pairs of eyes looking at us from the muddy water. It's a Croc! Our Guide tempted them over with a bit of chicken on a stick. It had all gone very quiet among the 10 of us punters. Next second this bloomin great



Giant Magnetic Termite Mound?



Definitely Off Road

A few days later we picked up our 4x4 (Toyota Prado). A real beast, but well suited to the outback. This beast was fully equipped with camping gear and various bits of emergency kit, but I was told not to use the winch as I was not qualified to use it (so here's hoping we did not get stuck)!

We set off to do this route know as "Over the Top" or OTT for short, this took us on normal roads for some of the way then it

was to join an old cattle track for 650kms (Gibb River Road) which is certainly off road and conditions that required a 4x4 vehicle. Forging rivers, dodging boulders and ruts made for an



Lake Argyle: An Evening Shot from our Cabin

exciting change from sailing the oceans. We drove from Darwin through to Kununarra, where we stayed by Lake Argyle, (which is manmade and the size of Tasmania and was constructed to provide for irrigation in this dry area). Here we took a scenic flight over the picturesque Bungle Bungle range of hills and we were impressed with the Bee Hive rocks , and we also saw a pink diamond mine (we gave the mine shop a miss)!

By now we had progressed into Western Australia, and onto the “Gibb River Road” which is where the off road stuff comes in. Wow, this was different, quite a lot of the road was gravelled, but when you hit the ruts and corrugations certainly a bit shaky. Here we really appreciated such a robust vehicle although the track was rough it was not really uncomfortable. We stayed at a cattle station one night, in some pretty swish up market



Red, Gibb River Road



A Boab Tree

rooms. The next day we had a 300km drive, so it was an early start, more river beds and various obstacles to cross, but you could get a move on, on many of the sections. Now accommodation in this part of the world is fairly thin on the ground, and since the Co

driver had said she would not be camping unless all rescue services, eg: Flying Doctor and Thunderbird 1-7 were out of action. I found a place called “Bell Gorge Wilderness Lodge” which sounded rather smart. This we pre booked and they seemed to offer all we required including ensuite. Even though a bit pricey we thought, sod it, lets do it. Well we arrived and discovered that it was a tent!



A poor shot of the Vista

OK “Glamping” was the term, and after Sue recovered from the initial shock, we had a couple of fantastic nights there. Right amid the Kimberly Range of hills, stunning scenery and magic colours. Taking a day off from distance driving, we enjoyed swimming in the river pools of Bell Gorge and lazing, but it wasn’t half hot during the middle of the day.



Glamping !



Bell Valley Gorge



A Fairly Dried up river

We eventually made it to Broome which was a pretty nice resort area in the NW of Western Australia, a few days of R and R and we returned the 4x4. We then flew down to Perth, and spent a few days with Ged and Audrey sharing in their Ruby wedding celebrations

before we flew back to Bundy.

A few days later we did the long flight back to the UK. Once again it was good to see everyone, catch up and this time a bit more visiting. We went to France to see Darren and Nichola who had emigrated to the Limoge area in June. A few days, doing the Monsieur et Madame bit then back home again, followed by a swift visit to Spain to surprise my grandchildren who were holidaying there. Sue was able to spend some time with her grandchildren. Laura is growing up fast had a few days away with her Nana. Michael, who now has an apprenticeship and is having driving lessons is now discovering the real world. Don’t they soon grow up!



Relais en Francais

We returned to Oz to partake in the “Down Under Rally” week, (you may recall we participated in the rally last year) this time it was in Bundaberg, so we met a few old, and met many new faces. Most participants attended the OCC BBQ we arranged with the help of Wayne Richards (OCC port officer) after the Rally week was over.

We headed over to Frazer Island for a while, anchored at a quiet 20 mile white beach with only 3 other boats in sight. We were visited by a few Hump Back Whales on their annual migration to Antarctica always a magical moment to savour. Whilst here, we were thinking about what to do next. We had always considered shipping Darramy back to Europe as we



Eric, despite the Tee shirt was good company!

did not want to sail the Indian and South Atlantic oceans. So we wrote to various ship transport companies with a fairly loose brief: anywhere from Eastern Australia to somewhere in Mediterranean. We pressed send and waited. No response, eventually we had a couple of replies with prices way out of our budget. So we decided that another year in Oz would be no great hardship, and that was that. A couple of weeks later we were leaving

Frazer Island early one morning, and before crossing the Wide Bay Bar, I thought better check the e mails in case we did not get a signal for a few days. Well there in the old inbox was an offer to ship us from Sydney at a price we could afford, with what turned out to be, the best shipping company ever. Within two hours of that e mail we had agreed to ship to Europe. (At times like these you don't hesitate when the price is less than half of the original quotes). We sailed to Scarborough, where we met up with Eric s/v Serena of Ore (OCC). We were telling him of our new plans, and we had to get to Sydney 500 miles south to get the ship. The pressure was on as by this time we had paid the money. Eric offered to come with



Skipper contemplating on Xmas Day in Manly

us, so we left the next day and arrived in Sydney after a good and fun sail, a few days later. We were well in time for Christmas, but more importantly we were able to prepare Darramy for her voyage to the Med. We spent Christmas in Manly, New Year again in Rose Bay to watch another unbelievable firework display. Things were still good Sydney Harbour.



Sue , Savouring Christmas in Manly



Yacht Express, massive against the Harbour Bridge

The middle of January we saw “Yacht Express” enter Sydney Harbour and anchor near us. All exciting stuff, and with the help of new Aussie friends Cam & Annie s/v Annecam we motored onto the ship. Now if



Which way Cam?

you don't know about this stuff, it is amazing, the deck of the ship lowers into the water, and you just literally motor onto the ship under

your own power. The mast stays up and they secure the boat. Eight other vessels also boarded. When finished the deck is raised again the boats supported and the boats are high and dry.

To be fair, its a bit more technical, but you should get the picture. I have to say the adjacent boat was six times our size and had a helicopter shrink wrapped on deck. So you can see the sort of circles we had moved into!! Alongside us was a beautiful 65 year old “Seven metre class” classic boat “Antara”, which was off to Greece to race in the La Spezia series this summer. (She'd never sailed outside Sydney harbour before)!



Meet the Neighbours!

We stayed in Sydney for a couple more days. During our last day I had got tickets to take Sue to the Opera House to see La Boheme which she loved, (a bit highbrow for me), so we felt it a fitting end to our time in Australia. We flew to NZ for a couple of superb weeks to

catch up with family and friends before the long flight back to the UK. We still love both Australia and New Zealand.



Genova: A Stark Contrast to Australia

Meanwhile Darramy had visited Hong Kong and Singapore before transiting the Suez Canal and onto Genoa, arriving early March. We boarded the ship, collected our paperwork from the shipping agent who had cleared us through customs. After the ship's deck was sunk again, we started the engine and motored

into the Marina Porto Antico right in the centre of the old town part of Genova as they say here.

It has taken a while to restore everything back to full working order on the boat, but now we are starting to explore this part of Italy. Last week we took the train to Milano. The designer capital of Europe. Gucci this, Prada that, Louis Vatsaname; Sue was in her element. To put some of this smart(???) designer gear in perspective; I have just installed a new electric windlass on the boat. For the price of one small Gucci handbag, I could buy two new electric windlasses. I know which is more useful!

We also saw the La Scala opera house. I personally think the one down under has got the edge.



“La Scala” Milano Opera House



Sydney Opera House

Oh, Sue reminded me about the Duomo Cathedral. Now that was spectacular, The interior and the exterior were all amazing. We even went up on the roof. The whole place was an unbelievable structure. It only took 600 year to complete. Builders Hey!



Duomo Cathedral. The way the photo was taken looks like its on its way to Pisa!

There seem to be a lot of day sailors here, so it looks as though we will have to get used to this as there is no going back now!

In reality we have had an unbelievable 5 years in the southern hemisphere. We consider ourselves to have been exceedingly fortunate. We have many, many fond memories of amazing people and wonderful places. The Mediterranean will be different, but there seems loads of history and different cultures to enjoy. It's all exciting and we will do our best to enjoy each day as per usual.

We keep getting asked what are our plans? Our answer is as usual NO idea, NO fixed plan, but we will think of something. Watch this space!

Arrivederci

So as usual it's either or (delete as applicable*)

Best Wishes *Kindest Regards* *Love and Hugs* *Ciao*

Brian and Sue

*You can view this and all our previous travelogues of the last eleven years on the **OCC site**.*

So try the link below. The latest should now be on top, scroll down for previous travelogues. Click on the blue print and hey presto: (Lots more of our witterings)!

<http://www.oceancruisingclub.org/index.php/forum/links-to-members-blog-sites/882-brian-wallace-publishes-his-accounts-of-darramy-on>