

THE BRAITHWAITE CHRONICLES

2008, the first full year of Jeremy's retirement, has been eventful to say the least. Both of us enjoy good health, Jeremy having lost 18 kilos in weight since August!! We have proved correct the retirement adage, 'I don't know how I ever had time to go to work.'



Our European Odyssey

We had to get some value from all those Frequent Flyer miles Jeremy accrued when he was working so in April we set off for three months in Europe. What an adventure! A couple of days in Tokyo, followed by a week in Paris staying with Gilles & Marie-Ange Pradere before moseying through southeast France to Italy where we stayed in an apartment in an old

Vezelay, SE France



monastery outside Verona for a couple of weeks. The concept is called agriturismo and, providing you are willing to drive among the trucks on the Autostrada, and face the onslaught of aggressive Italian drivers in everything from three-wheeled Ape farm trucks to Ferraris, it means you can stay relatively inexpensively in the countryside.

From our apartment we explored Lake Garda, Verona, Vincenza and, of course Venice. Whoops, almost forgot the Ferrari Museum at Modena... how could I miss that?



Masks in Venice

Then onto Heidelberg via Cortina for the Jim Clark Revival Race Meeting at Hockenheim. Great weekend of racing with cars we never see in Oz. Headed down to Florence where we stayed in a farmhouse in the hills about 12k from the town. As well as spending time in Florence we explored Tuscany and ate the best ice cream ever in San Gimignano.

Then to Monaco where we stayed in an apartment organised by our friend, Patrick Young. By coincidence (yeah, right, ha ha) we were there for the Monaco Historic GP and even had press accreditation. More than 300 cars, all immaculately presented, raced over the weekend, many in earnest. Jeremy took some wonderful photographs and has compiled an A3, 174 page book which, as we write, is going to print as a limited edition of 1000. Fingers crossed.



Sir Stirling Moss, still doing it!



Distinctive orange BRM nose

Flew from Nice to London for an overnight stay at the Hilton (more points!) then onto St Petersburg. Nothing we had read or seen prepared us for the beauty of the place. We were overwhelmed by the museums and art galleries, the palaces (both interior and exterior) and, totally unexpectedly, the gardens.

We had taken the plunge and organised a private guide over the internet for our 5 day trip. Finding Tatiana was the best investment we ever made as she ensured we a) never had to queue and b) saw everything we wanted to see. In one person we had a chauffer, tour guide, ticket fixer, art appreciation expert and friend.

Each day we were on the go from morning to night with Tatiana making sure we got value for money. While the weather was cold, especially after Florence, we were blessed with clear sunny days with bright blue skies.



In the mountains to the east of Florence we followed the old Mille Miglia route and could not believe the rally cars did 180+ mph on such roads.



Mountains east of Florence



View from our apartment near Florence



Tatiana at Peterhof



Peterhof Palace & gardens



Catherine Palace



The Hermitage



Garden at Pavlovsk



Tatiana organised accommodation for us at a B&B. There was some initial trepidation when we were faced with an old building facade and brown steel doors with no windows, a distinctly old and decrepit staircase and doubtful one-person lift. The Assembly B&B proved wonderful. Natalia, our hostess, had decorated the apartment in Danish-style and served the most delicious breakfasts each day (eg. Smoked salmon and caviar). She also insisted we drink vodka with her the night before we left and those who know Julie's drinking habits will be shocked to learn she sank 6 shot glasses and didn't have a hangover!



*Natalia at her B&B
...the mess is all ours!*

Exhausted, we flew back to London to spend a month in England and Scotland catching up with family and friends. Everyone made us welcome and it was a fitting end to a fabulous holiday.

To the Flinders

In September we loaded Genevieve (our caravan), hooked her onto the new Toyota Landcruiser we had just taken delivery of and set off for a month in the Flinders Ranges and the Eyre Peninsula. Magic scenery in the Flinders. Much walking and 4WD driving. We ate our way around the oyster beds of the Eyre Peninsula until we reached Coffin Bay where we paid \$5.00 a dozen for oysters fresh from the water that morning. (For those overseas, these are some of the best oysters in the world).



Wilpena Pound in the Flinders Ranges from the air

Followed the Murray River as far as Wodonga on the way home and then came back via Canberra and the Floriade show – an incredible array of flowers set in the nation's capital.

Next year we plan to go round the top of Australia to the Kimberley's and Broome and then follow the wild flowers south to Perth and Margaret River.

On the Car front

Jeremy has found an old Jaguar XK150 as a restoration project. It's a Fixed Head Coupe which was built in 1957 and went to New York initially. The car came to Australia in 1989 and restoration was started but not finished. The car is in pieces and there's a lot of work to finish it, with the plan being to paint her black with light tan trim. When finished it should look something like this:



Julie's book: current title 'The Sergeant and the Firebird'

Travel has meant Julie has had to fit in writing between gallivanting around the world. The fifth re-write has been finished (did you know most 'real' authors, like Thomas Kennelly, write everything four or five times? It made Julie feel better knowing that!). Julie is double checking facts and tracking down a military expert to review the manuscript before she tries to find a publisher next year.

And another book!

Julie also found time to publish a book of our trip to Europe as a 60th Birthday present for Jeremy. Titled '2008 Odyssey' it's a 150 page landscape book printed as a one-off. The wonders of modern digital printing!



Lost Gardens of Heligan, Cornwall



Eden Project, Cornwall



Gardens at Alnwick, Northumberland



Julie rescuing sheep in North Tyne River...she was heard to mutter why had she chosen this day to wear Wellington boots



Skye



View from hotel on Skye where we celebrated our 30th wedding anniversary



Sheep posing precariously on a cliff in Skye

P.S. For those who know the Braithwaite rule of one motoring event = one garden, for once Jules ended up in front on this trip!

We wish you all a Happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous 2009

