

Clare's Diary

11th May 2011

Wednesday

This morning I wake up in beautiful Perth and I catch up on a few emails before meeting my friend Elena and her work colleagues for a hearty lunch. The inevitable jet lag took hold last night and I found myself staring at the ceiling at 3am so I take advantage of the warm sunshine and doze in the gardens outside Elena's office. She works as a Chiropractic Assistant, and after my nap I learn a bit more about what the role entails before accompanying her to a meeting of St. John's Ambulance, the charity with which she volunteers.

Thursday

Elena and I bring her dog Gillian to the beach for a long walk this morning. I cannot get enough of the sunshine and I spend a couple of hours reading in her back garden before walking into Fremantle for another wander around the shops. It seems that my body clock has finally adjusted and I have an early night hopping into bed straight after the delicious dinner that Elena's well trained boyfriend, Ollie, cooks!

Friday

I am delighted to be joining several members of the Perth Rose committee for lunch at Parliament House today. We are guests of Tony O'Gorman, an Irish member of the Legislative Assembly (equivalent to our parliament) who has been living in Perth for many years now. Also joining us is Mollie Hartley, the 2010 Perth Rose who I haven't seen since Tralee. It feels like we only saw each other yesterday as we set to catching up on all our news from the last 8 months and by the end of the conversation I think I have managed to convince her to come back to Tralee this year too! Although I didn't have much work to do! We have a delicious lunch before Tony gives us a tour of the building. I spend the afternoon eating frozen yoghurt and wandering along the esplanade in Perth city before catching the train home.

Saturday

Rachel Rogan of the Rose committee collects me bright and early this morning as I am joining the Perth Rose entrants at Fremantle FM to do a quick radio interview. We all go for breakfast afterwards and I am glad to get the opportunity to get to know the girls a little better. Rachel and I pop into her house briefly before driving out to Houghton's winery on the far side of the city. I am thrilled to meet Lisa Manning, the 2001 Rose of Tralee. We taste several of their wines before sitting down to a lunch fit for a queen. There are huge salads, cheese platters, assorted breads and meats as well as an endless supply of sparkling rosé! Afterwards the girls have their group interview with the judges and we get a tour of the oldest parts of the vineyard. The afternoon drifts onwards and Sarah McNamara, another member of the committee and I accompany Judy Walsh one of the judges, to the Irish Club in the suburb of Subiaco. Tonight, we are treated to a showing of Juno and the Paycock which has been put on by the Irish

Theatre Players, of which Judy is a well established member. Such an enjoyable end to a wonderful day.

Sunday

Elena has been in Sydney this weekend on a training exercise and I am meeting her in Brisbane this evening for a week's holidays! Roberta Andrew from the Queensland Rose Committee collects me from the airport and we have a bite to eat together before she very generously hands over the keys to her car which I am borrowing for the week.

Monday

After a quick peek in some of the shops, we hit the road to Australia Zoo, the home of the late Steve Irwin and Crocodile Hunter extraordinaire! Needless to say there are several different breeds of crocodile and I even get to feed some roos and an elephant! Afterwards it's onto an eco lodge in the heart of the Glass House Mountains. Our little eco lodge is paradise. We spend the evening curled up in blankets on the verandah reading our books and sipping the wine I have lugged all the way from Houghton's, just perfect!

Tuesday

After a breakfast of tropical fruits picked from the orchard and coffee made from home grown beans Elena and I set out on the tourist route through the mountains. We stop for lunch in the charming town of Montville which looks right down over the mountains. We spend hours pottering through the local craft shops and I pick up a few pressies here and there. By evening we are back in the car and heading to Noosa, a beachside resort on the Sunshine Coast where we will spend the next few days.