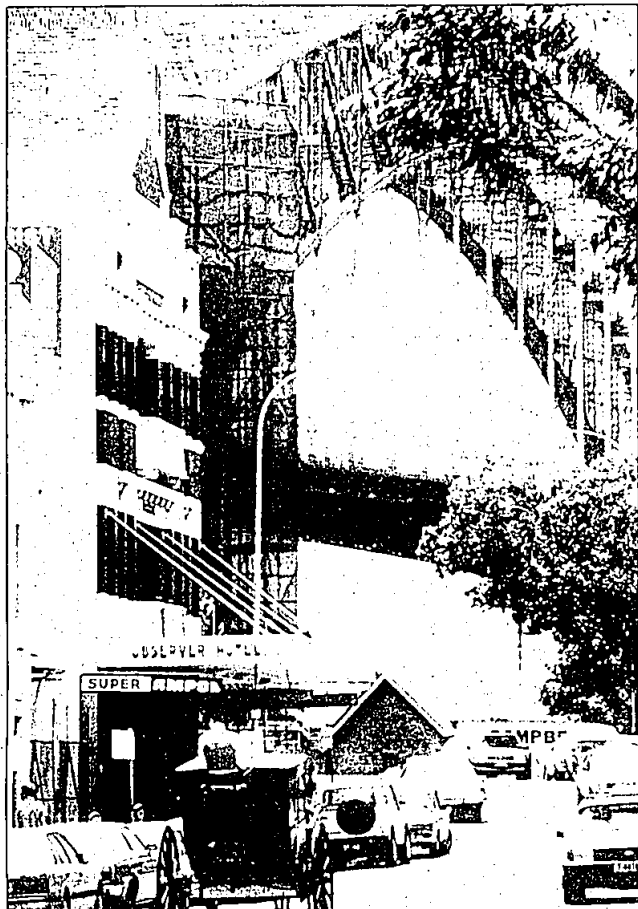


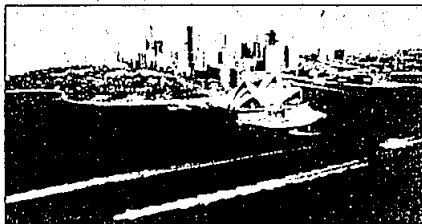
TRAVEL

G&E: Monday, February 17, 1992

Summertime in Sydney



Sydney's Harbor Bridge adds an imposing presence to parts of the Australian seaport's skyline. If skylines aren't enough, culture thrives at the famed Sydney Opera House while nearby there are endless stretches of pristine beach. Remember: winter is summer down under.



The Sydney Opera House, with its odd roof, is home to theater, opera, ballet and symphony productions.

City celebrates 150th birthday

By Andrea Anderson-Ribadeneira
New York Times Syndicate

Summertime in Sydney, Australia, is a brilliant affair. The city, always enhanced by the harbor's deep blue, is further brightened with the colors of wattle, jacaranda and flame trees in bloom.

The harbor comes alive with fleets of striped spinakers and Windsurfers dancing from bay to bay. Beaches, quiet and dignified in the autumn and winter (March through August) turn to festival grounds full of boisterous sunbathers and surfers.

They arrive in hordes, many in neon bathing suits with matching zinc sunblock on their noses. Broad strips of pristine white sand are patterned with beach towels from the promenade to the water's edge.

With this year being the 150th anniversary of the city, residents of Sydney celebrated Australia Day (Jan. 26), commemorating the arrival of the first European settlers in 1788, and the celebrations will continue right through December.

Between 1788, when Capt. Arthur Phillip moored off Sydney Cove with the first fleet of convicts, and 1842, when Britain first granted the city a right to representative government, Sydney was considered nothing more than a rough colonial outpost.

With establishment of a partially elected legislative council, Sydney was on its way to becoming more than a dumping ground for England's outcasts.

To celebrate the sesquicentennial the current city council has coordinated a series of events that involve almost every area and cultural institution in Sydney. The highlights include Queen Elizabeth's arrival for the opening of the refurbished Victorian-era Town Hall on Feb. 29.

EVENTS

The Opera House is the focal point of Sydney's rich cultural life. Information and bookings for all theater, opera, ballet and

symphony productions held at the Opera House can be obtained by calling 250-7777.

Half-price tickets for that day's performances are sold for cash only at the Halfix booth on Martin Place from noon to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday and noon to 5 p.m. on Saturday. For more information call 0055-20500.

The summer opera season runs through March 2. Out of the six scheduled works, two, "Fidelio" and "The Marriage of Figaro," are new productions.

The winter season runs from June to October and contains twice as many productions. Tickets cost \$20 to \$91. All prices are in U.S. dollars at an exchange of 75 American cents for one Australian dollar.

A play by Australia's foremost contemporary playwright, David Williamson, started off the year for the Sydney Theater Co. "Money and Friends" is a comedy about modern Australians facing the recession and runs through Feb. 29. Tickets cost \$19 to \$25.

To celebrate the 60th anniversary of its opening, the Harbor Bridge is going to invite the city aboard for a huge party on March 15. Traffic will be banned and the bridge transformed into a stage with entertainment from one end to the other.

Top Australian and international musicians will converge in Sydney for the International Jazz Festival from March 19 to March 29. James Morrison, the multi-instrumentalist who is one of Australia's contemporary jazz stars, opens the festival in concert with the American Ray Brown Trio. For more information call 265-9554.

An Easter parade through the city opens this year's Royal Easter Show, a farming exhibition of grand proportions that offers visitors an impressive introduction to rural Australia. Events range from livestock parades to cake decorating contests.

The show will be from April 10 to April 21 at the Sydney Showground in Paddington. Tickets are \$9. For more information call 0655-21111.

For information on these and other events check The Sydney Morning Herald's Friday Metro section.

Hostel trips for the young at heart

By Everett Potter
special writer

Consumers searching for a real travel bargain in 1992 would do well to reflect on the late 1960s. During those heady days of student travel, all that was needed for a lengthy European vacation was a cheap charter-airline ticket, a couple of hundred dollars and an American Youth Hostel card.

"The AYH card, more than anything else, allowed students to spend eight after night in major cities and small towns throughout Europe for just a few dollars a day.

"A hostel provided overnight, dormitory-style accommodations in a simple but clean facility, with separate bedrooms and bathrooms for men and women.

"Those cheap charters may be a distant memory, but AYH lives on. And membership in the non-profit AYH is not restricted to the youthful backpacking set either.

"The youth in AYH really means 'young at heart,'" said David Kalter, program education manager for American Youth Hostels.

"There has never been an upper age limit for members of AYH. In fact, we have members of every age, from 5 or 6 on up."

Since AYH is affiliated with the International Youth Hostel Federation, members of AYH have access to more than 5,300 hostels world-

wide, at prices ranging from 35 cents a night in India to \$18.75 a night in New York City.

The average accommodation ranges from \$7 to \$10 a night.

The hostel itself might be a log cabin, a Victorian mansion, a renovated lighthouse or a modern high-rise building in a major city center.

The hostel movement was started in Germany in 1909 by a schoolteacher named Richard Schirrmann, who was fond of taking groups of students on mountain hikes.

Schirrmann wanted to extend the hikes but was unable to find affordable overnight accommodations. His solution was to persuade schoolmasters in neighboring towns to allow their schoolhouses to be used for the night.

In return, the young hikers would rise early and tidy up the place in time for the first classes.

"The idea 'spread like wildfire throughout Germany and to other European countries,'" said Kalter, "Although schoolhouses aren't used these days, the idea of getting up for an early departure is still practiced by most hostels."

"As for leaving the schoolhouse neat and clean, the concept of performing a few chores in exchange for inexpensive accommodation has long been a part of the hostel experience, although that is changing.

"Traditionally," said Kalter, "people have been asked to sweep a floor, take out some garbage or do some task that might take five minutes, but is essential to the communal living arrangement."

The hostel concept began in the

United States under the guidance of Monroe and Isabel Smith who had encountered hostels in Germany when they escorted a group of Boy Scouts there in 1932.

They founded AYH in 1934 and opened the first American hostel in Northfield, Mass. the same year.

There are now 240 hostels throughout the United States. In 1990 they registered 888,000 overnight guests.

While dormitory-style accommodations are still the norm — and members still need the inexpensive sheet known as a "sleep sack" that eliminates the bedding cost for hostels — some things have changed.

An increasing number of hostels have private "family rooms" for families traveling together. Others have separate rooms for single travelers. These rooms rent for a higher fee.

It's now possible to reserve a hostel bed ahead of time by fax for a nominal fee — which varies by location. Credit cards are even accepted by some hostels.

AYH's most popular domestic trip

is the "Salty Dog," a 12-day cycling trip that covers the Cape Cod National Seashore, Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard and Boston. The cost is \$700, which includes hostel accommodations, three group-prepared meals a day and extras.

For information contact American Youth Hostel, P.O. Box 37613, Washington, D.C. 20013 or call (202) 783-6161.

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