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Sunday, Dec. 4, 2011 ★ Section N

Family flying

Folks flying with kids seldom feel special on airlines these days. And any perks are likely to come at extra cost.

By Michelle Higgins
NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

Surely they could spare a little milk, right?

But when John and Mary Rose Lin of Jersey City, N.J., ran out of milk for their 18-month-old twins on a recent Continental flight from Newark to Maui, the flight attendant refused to give them more. That particular beverage, the Lins recall being told, was for coffee, not children. "I was not asking for a full bottle, just a cup," said Mary Rose Lin, noting that she even offered to pay for the milk.

It was the low point of an arduous trip.

The misery of air travel is no surprise to anyone who has boarded a domestic flight in the last five years. As airlines have maximized capacity and slashed services, passengers have learned to brace themselves for packed planes, stuffed overhead bins, harried flight attendants, and fees for everything from pretzels to pillows. On top of that are delays and cancellations.

For families, however, the costs and the inconveniences are compounded.

See FAMILY on N4

A mother and her 3-year-old daughter at Logan Airport in Boston. Flying with children today isn't like the '60s, when families seemed to get royal treatment.

STEPHAN SAVOIA / Associated Press, file

Seeing those laid-back Aussies as a fighting force

MICHAEL MILNE

At Sydney's Victoria Barracks, left, free tours are led by the Corps of Guides, retired veterans. A metal badge on the guide's hat bears a female crown — for Queen Elizabeth — in the army symbol.

Australia is often thought of as a laid-back nation whose relaxed citizens seem to be on permanent vacation. Perhaps this carefree attitude is due to the fact that more than 90 percent of the population lives within the siren call of the beach. But while much of the culture has been formed by an outlook based on surf and sand, the country has also experienced dark days and challenges throughout its history.

An excellent way to learn about this past is to visit several sites in Sydney that highlight the country's military legacy. A good place to start is the Victoria Barracks, located on 29 acres in the neighborhood of Paddington. Built in the 1840s by mostly convict labor, the colonnaded sandstone buildings are the most significant group of late-Georgian architecture in Australia and

See AUSTRALIA on N6

A Year and A World
By Larissa and Michael Milne

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Sydney sites that salute the Aussie military

AUSTRALIA from N1

one of the finest historic barracks in the world.

Free tours are offered on Thursdays by the Victoria Barracks Corps of Guides, retired veterans wearing khaki army slouch hats and blue blazers. Our guide, David, had been stationed at the barracks during the Vietnam War so he knew the place well. The tour starts in the Guard House with a visit to the four cells that held "drunken and outrageous persons." This being an army base with young soldiers away from home, the cells were eventually expanded into another building.

While leaving the Guard House, David pointed out a metal badge on his cap and explained the significance of the crown in the center of the Australian army symbol. The current logo contains a female crown (yes, male and female crowns are different) representing the reigning monarch, Queen Elizabeth II. He said that after "Lizzie goes" the logo will be updated to show a male crown for King Charles, or perhaps King William. Loyalty to the monarchy lives on in the Australian army.

The tour of the barracks includes the Army Museum of New South Wales. The museum traces the history of the Australian army from the early days of the colony to World War II. Pride of place is given to the famed Gallipoli Cloth, a five-foot-square fabric containing the signatures of the first soldiers who returned from the disastrous Gallipoli campaign in World War I. Most of what we knew about that battle was gleaned from the movie of the same name starring Mel Gibson. We were to learn much more a bit later in the day.

After touring the Victoria Barracks we took a 10-minute bus ride to the ANZAC Memorial located in Hyde Park in the center of Sydney. ANZAC, revered in Australia, is the Australia New Zealand Army Corps that fought in the battle of Gallipoli. Planned as a bold move to land ANZAC troops on the shifting sands of the Gallipoli Peninsula, it turned out to be a disaster. The troops were pinned down on the beach and under constant enemy fire for eight months, only to be evacuated with tremendous losses.

Australians, being the positive creatures they are, view the battle as a supreme example of their soldiers' gallantry and fortitude. One Korean War veteran explained that even though Gallipoli was a major defeat, "The nation was forged by that battle, it made Australia the nation that it is today. You can't overestimate its significance."

The square, 98-foot-tall memorial is clad in pink granite quarried from nearby Barrenjoey. The art deco design caused somewhat of an uproar due to its break from traditional memorial architecture of the time. Although there are no names of soldiers inscribed at the monument, the 120,000 stars in the ceiling represent those who served in the war. The interior's main focus is a poignant statue of a soldier, whose lifeless body lies on a sword and shield being held aloft by three women and an infant representing mother, wife, sister, and child: those who were left behind by the brutality of war.

The cruciform base of the memorial houses a museum dedicated to the Gallipoli campaign. It has been expanded to include the role of Australian troops right up to the Gulf War. Mementos from the battle are on display and sketchy black-and-white films taken at the time run on a continuous loop to give the visitor a "you are there" feel.

The museum continues with exhibits about the home front in World War II. For obvious reasons we were particularly drawn to the display of Warrant Officer GN Milne's diary; he was stationed at a hospital in Darwin, Australia, when it was damaged by Japanese bombing raids. The ANZAC Memorial gives visitors a greater appreciation of Australia at war.

The last stop on our personal military campaign of Sydney was the Australian National Maritime Museum. Everything we had seen so far was land-based, but Australia is a nation that is defined by the sea. The exhibition is outstanding; it combines the finest aspects of a traditional museum — glass cases chock-full of memorabilia — with the hands-on features of a "Please Touch" display.

Several cases house large-scale models of the ships that have held the coveted designation HMAS Sydney; from the World War I-era cruiser that escorted the first ANZAC convoy right up to the fourth incarnation, a guided missile frigate that helped support sanctions against Iraq. In between we learned the sobering tale of the third HMAS Sydney, a light cruiser that was returning home from Europe in 1941, only to be sunk by a German raider off the coast of western Australia with the loss of all hands.

The interactive displays include one where the visitor plays the role of a submarine sonar technician trying to decipher garbled underwater sounds. The player guesses what each sound represents and is promoted (or demoted) based on the response. We kept at it for some time until we could finally tell the difference between a group of porpoises and a damaged piston rod.

At this point we had been to enough sobering military displays for one day. Fortunately, the Maritime Museum also has an exhibit devoted to the nation's surfing heritage. This is the Australia that lives on in foreign perceptions of the country. While the typical Australian's outlook on life is pretty sunny, it is a nation that has witnessed dark clouds as well. In one day we were able to witness both sides of Australia. A nation that was forged on the sands of Gallipoli was later nurtured on the sands of its beaches to create the vibrant country that it is today.

MICHAEL MILNE

The National Maritime Museum combines the glass cases of memorabilia of a traditional museum with the hands-on features of a "please touch" exhibit.

Information

Victoria Barracks/Army Museum of New South Wales

Location: Oxford Street in Paddington, a 10-minute bus ride from the center of Sydney. Buses 378, 380 and 382 stop right in front.

Hours: The Army Museum is open on Thursday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Victoria Barracks is still an active Army base so guided tours are required. These are offered on Thursdays at 10 a.m.

Admission: Tickets are $2 to the Army Museum while the guided tour is free.

Web: www.army.gov.au/ArmyMuseumofNSW/

ANZAC Memorial

Location: Hyde Park South in the center of Sydney. Pretty much every city bus stops here. The nearest train station is Museum Station

Hours: The memorial is open every day, except Good Friday and Christmas Day, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Admission: Free

Web: www.anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au/home

Australian National Maritime Museum

Location: Darling Harbour in Sydney. Easy access from the city center by foot, bus, light rail, ferry or monorail.

Hours: Open daily 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Until 6 p.m in January.) Closed Christmas Day.

Admission: Entrance to the museum is free. Visitors wishing to board ships including a submarine, Navy destroyer, and full-scale replica of Captain Cook's Endeavour must purchase a separate ticket. (Adults: $12-$32 and children: $7-$17.) Prices are in Australian dollars, which are about one-to-one with US dollars.

Web: www.anmm.gov.au/

A figurehead of Admiral Lord Nelson coexists with a modern Navy helicopter at the maritime museum. Interactive displays include one allowing the visitor to play submarine sonar technician deciphering underwater sounds.

Larissa and Michael Milne are traveling around the world for a year and will be reporting in regularly about their journey. You can follow them at www.ChangesInLongitude.com.

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