

Many of our dancers escaped from Perth during the year. Here are some of their tales - not a lot of dancing during their holidays!

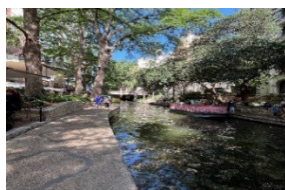
John and Jenny Bardill - A Trip to America 2023

Jen and I took the very huge step of travelling to America spending the month of August in Houston, Texas to be exact staying with our son Tristan and his family. Our arrival in Houston was very warm - a heatwave in fact. It was their summer time and the heat was so intense farmers were feeding their chickens crushed ice to keep them from laying hard boiled eggs.

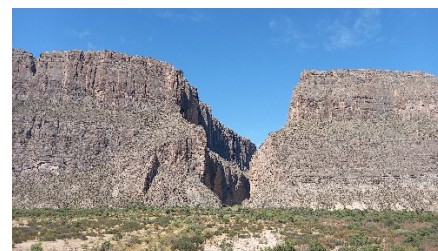
Arriving after a 28-hour travel time, we were quickly swept away to watch swimming lessons and visit "The Club". The Club is an amazing menagerie of adult and children entertainment with its own private zoo.



After 2-3 days recuperation we all hit the road for a 9-day trip into West Texas – The Badlands. Our first stop was San Antonio, which is a beautiful city. Although inland from the coast the city has a network of Venetian type canals. We caught a boat to float around and take in a bit of history. In searing heat, we visited the Botanical Gardens which were fantastic. Naturally we visited The Alamo, an old mission that was one of the focal point in history of Texas fighting for Independence. We toured the San Antonio Caves which were stunning.



Then onto Lajitas, a largely forgotten Badlands township with some military history and now a golf resort!! The greens were very green, everything else was dry and barren. Much you would see in any western movie. Gunfight at the OK Corral comes to mind. The accommodation was comfortable (old renovated barracks) but whilst the pool was brilliant. It had no shade from the interminable heat. We took in some sightseeing around the Rio Grande river border. You could say we saw Mexico.



From there we travelled through hugely empty desert type country to Fort Davis, a decommissioned army post and now heritage facility. The township itself is small with old western type buildings. The purpose of our visit there was to visit Steven Janowiecki at the Mt McDonald Observatory. Some of you may remember his stay here when he set up Contradance sessions.

We had dinner with Steven who then very kindly gave us a personal tour of the Hobby – Eberly, one of the scopes he oversees.



Returning to Houston we stopped at Fredricksburg, a thriving Germanic township. Buildings and beer halls all designed to mimic German culture and cuisine. Spending only a night there then back to Houston.

After a few days rest we flew off to Washington and did what every tourist does – visit Abe Lincoln memorial, the Obelisk, the Museums. The city itself was very different to Houston. Cleaner, more interesting and relaxed.



Then back to Houston. Tristan and Kate then travelled to Mexico for 5 days, while we babysat the grandies. Tristan organised Uber drivers to take myself and the kids to school. That was an interesting experience and conversation as each of the drivers came from different countries. For example Cuba, Honduras, Ethiopia, Mexico.

When the very relaxed parents returned, Jen and I flew to Vancouver to visit family and spent several days there. Visiting a ravine (next to the local high school) we came to within 10 feet of a black bear who either didn't see us or was scared at the sight of us. Either way he /she was running across our exit point which was relief as we had nowhere else to go.

Back in Houston we spent some relaxing time with the family. We had some exciting moments like several baby snakes in the swimming pool, and armadillos drowned in the pool. We took in a baseball game which was a real experience. We toured NASA and were entertained in the same facility that directed the landing on the moon.



Houston itself is not an attractive city. It is a petroleum energy city with high rise buildings and spaghetti junction freeways, some going up several stories high. Perhaps our limited time there and my hesitancy of getting behind the wheel prevented us from seeing more. Another long journey home we arrived back in Perth on the 6th September. All in all, it was a great adventure - we got in and out of Texas without getting shot. More importantly we had a fabulous time spent with the family.

Pam Massey in New Zealand

Mid Jan-mid March this year I went to NZ. Planned then to avoid our hottest months, that I believe were cooler! And to catch NZ's best heat. I nearly caught the cyclone floods landslides, & earthquake in Wellington, but fortunately missed it going to S.Island first, & then following the sun northward. I also missed the train from Wellington back up to Auckland! ☐

Object of trip was to see as many people & places as I could, especially S.Is that I hadn't seen before. Only knew one person there, & she said "If I'm willing to drive their motor home she'd come round S.Is with me for 3 wks!!" Well that wasn't an offer I could refuse! So I drove this 6.5m mobile home for 3 weeks, while she navigated, which was fun as she's dyslexic & doesn't know her left from her right!☐ Once I'd got used to it I found it very easy to drive, even round the many hairy hairpin bends! O cyclists PLEASE wear hi-viz!!! They were all in black.....

We did well in 3 weeks. Obviously didn't see everything or go everywhere, but basically down the west, across to Wanika, down to Gore, then diagonally headed north towards the east coast & up.

I also travelled by truck with the little boy I was nanny for 50 years ago....from Auckland to Christchurch & back up via Loui Pass to Nelson.

On N.Is I stayed with his little sister I toilet trained. She's dry now, at 52.....

I also stayed with Rae Storey who was at Belcho's workshop in Bulgaria in 1997!

In Rototura with a German friend, we bumped into a herd of morris dancers....as you do!!

Last stop way north of Auckland in the sunshine by which time it was raining in S.Is, so I got that right!

There were others I saw & it was a lot of juggling people & places into availability & geographical order! Family of 5th cousins I didn't know I had was pretty special!



Glad I did it, but came home exhausted!!

Pam Massey

November 2023

Gisela was also in New Zealand and other places

Does anyone remember Rae, Rae Storey? I met Rae at our epic Bulgaria dance tour with Belcho many, many years ago. She's a teacher/dancer in Auckland, she mainly worked with children.

She still teaches folk dance twice weekly on top of her garage in a room with 5-8 ladies.

Rae is fit, driving, dancing - and looking after her husband Jack who has mobility and visual limitations. I stayed at Remura with her and Jack for a couple off days in Auckland en route to Queenstown for a bit of snow and ski. It's about 7 hrs Perth-Auckland, so a bit of a hike but worth it for the 10 days I took.



She continues to do a stellar job editing a national NZ Dance Newsletter, copies of which go to the State Library - a valuable record of NZ culture and history.

I enjoyed joining for her dance sessions and exploring Auckland and surrounds a bit.

The weekend after I left they had the annual 'winter warmer' mixed groups dance weekend. Of course Andre also had numerous visits to teach in NZ.

Then on to Queenstown for 4 days skiing - at The Remarkables and Coronet Peak ski fields, which was the whole focus of the trip. The timing was great as the snow was plentiful and it was just wonderful to see, smell and touch the white magic powder - plus the views.



Snow and weather conditions were good, it sure is a days work to get the gear on and around in it up/down the mountains. It's beautifully panoramic those peaks around the lake, Lord if the Rings country.

And did I mention that I also went to Victoria (April), Brisbane (May), Adelaide (November) - and will be heading to Sydney over the holiday period. All in lieu of the customary European travel.



Did I say that I also went to Brisbane?! ... and Adelaide

Gisela Gmeinder

November 2023

Williams's Wanderings 2023

Recently, our "Let's Escape winter" motorhome holidays have been far from 'normal', ensured first by the 'Covid-years' and then by a broken wrist in 2022. Our 2023 trip was down France, across Northern Spain and on to Porto in Portugal. It was a melange of old and new places. of highs and lows and with more than a smattering of culture!

There was a kicker towards the end of the holiday when we both caught covid in Scotland; Oh yes, did I say that we went there too?

Perhaps 13 weeks without dancing was a bit too long although I did find an aging group à la Souleiado in Cahors on an evening walk, but that was it! No dancing!

For us it was a classic, very varied holiday; lots of high points - metaphoric and actual. The cable car in the Picos de Europa near Potes whisked us up 750m to 1823m in four minutes. That was contrasted by the superb surrounding gorges of Obarra, Hermida and of Los Beyos.. So fabulous, that we looped around and redid two of them!



Van at the Pico de Europa



Julius Caesar was in Lugo 1st



Gaudi's Caprice in Comillas



Santiago de Compostella

Some new and highly recommended places include Léon, Lugo, Albi, Luxembourg, Viana do Castelo and Porto; and we finally managed to see the cathedral at Chartres from the inside. Also, Monet's garden at Giverny, which won our prize for the most crowded place. The crowd was very patient but you could have walked on people's heads!!

In the 'bizarre' category was El Caprice in Comillas, created by Gaudi. It was like a Lego dream. Nice town too!



Reflections at Givet



Vineyards along the Douro



36,000 yo painting at Altamira



Dancers- Viano do Castelo

Oldest and most fascinating was the 36,000 year old cave painting at Altamira and the nearby Cueva de Castillo in Cantabria, their paintings of animals were so, so lifelike.

The 'favorite garden' prize goes to Barcelos both for the overall impression and for the delicacy of detail. They also had the largest group of accordion players :->



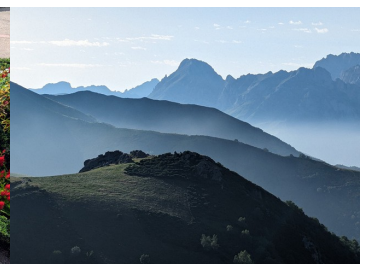
Sitting on a large park bench
Torrelavega



The world's largest train
station - Canfranc



Flower border - Barcelos



Misty mountains - above the
Puerto de San Glorio

Back in the UK we got a lot more value from our WA National Trust card and visited places such as Hardwick and Kedleston Halls, Culross, Cuzean Castle and Falkland Palace. The best 'museum' prize has to go to the Burrell Collection. Opened by the king in 2023, it houses part of the 9,000 artworks collected by the shipbuilder Sir William Burrell and donated to the City of Glasgow.

There is still much to discover, so roll on 2024; One more time!

Martin Williams

November 2023