

The Outback Heritage Cruise on the Murray Princess

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We joined our coach in Adelaide shortly after 2pm for a leisurely drive to our boarding point at Mannum arriving just before 4pm. Our luggage was quickly taken to our cabin as we checked in. Before we went to our cabin to unpack we were presented with a special Murray Princess cruise mug for use whilst on board and to take home as a souvenir. After unpacking we had time to explore the ship and then attend Captain Ray Weedon's welcome and safety drill.

The cruise was to take us north on the great Murray River from the historic river port of Mannum upriver through the big river bends to lock 1 at Blanchetown. Over the coming days we were to experience the magic and majesty of the spectacular scenery, from towering sandstone cliffs to expansive wetlands as well as seeing a variety of Australian wildlife, including kangaroos and many of the bird species that inhabit the riverlands. Highlights of this heritage cruise include a visit to a vineyard, wine-tasting at the cellar door; a visit to a typical Australian farm, woolshed and wildlife shelter, an Aussie barbecue beside the river; a night time tractor and cart ride, a walking tour of an aboriginal reserve and a speed boat ride.

Our starting point of Mannum is a picturesque river town (pop. 2000), founded in 1852 by William Randell, who built Australia's first steamboat, the Mary-Ann. Mannum soon became the cradle of the river trade. Today the river is still the main attraction, with many boats using the river and water for agriculture. In 1954 an 84km pipeline was completed between Mannum and Adelaide to supply water to metropolitan Adelaide.

It was soon time to attend the Sturt Dining Room to meet our table mates for a wonderful dinner. On this trip there were only 69 passengers on board and overall a great bunch of people. As we enjoyed the meal the Murray Princess was cruising up the Murray and arrived at our overnight mooring spot around 10.30pm. After dinner the on-board entertainer provided music for the night owls.