

# Summer Getaway To Australia

## They're Already Planning For Next Year

Australia is like no other place on earth. Just ask the group of six Kings Mountain world travelers who just returned from a fabulous summer vacation.

Betty Gamble, Jessie Collins, Herman and Chole Sparks, Peggy Baird and Jo Ann Bowen are already making plans for next summer's get-away to either Spain and Portugal or Russia.

"We'll just wait a few months and get together and start making plans," said Herman Sparks, who has found that he's having the time of life in retirement by visiting new and exciting places.

"Australia is a land of amazing contrasts and new experiences," says Betty Gamble, Vocational Director at Kings Mountain District Schools, who got the five friends together in January and they decided that Australia was where they wanted to vacation during her and Peggy Baird's summer vacation from school and Jesse Collins's vacation from Cyprus Foote Mineral.

"Betty and I have traveled together every summer for the last dozen years to many different places but Australia was the continent I had always wanted to see," said Jessie Collins. "We found it a lot closer and a little more economical than we thought and the flight across the Pacific was easy, despite the fact that it took 13 1/2 hours from Los Angeles and we came up and down in an airplane 16 times during the two-week trip."

"Actually we were 23 hours in the air," said Herman Sparks, who described Australia as 25,000 miles away from the world's largest island and smallest continent, thriving with cities, vast rural landscapes, white sandy beaches, tropical rainforests, unique wildflowers, and birds and animals found nowhere else on earth."

Chole Sparks discovered that you can surf or ski, ride glassbottom boats discover ancient Aboriginal art, and see a lot in just two weeks. Nowhere else in the world can you cuddle a koala or share the golf course with inquisitive kangaroos, see Aboriginal rock art painted thousands of years ago, explore the Great Barrier Reef, and wonder at natural land formations such as Uluru (Ayers Rock) and Katherine Gorge formed over millions of years.

Peggy Baird, Home Economics teacher at KMSHS, a traveling companion of Gamble and Collins for several years, was fascinated with Aussie "barbecues," actually steak prepared on the grill and served with baked potato and a salad, greens topped with a type of relish rich in nutrients.

The winter season-June to August-is mild by Northern Hemisphere standards. While the temperatures were soaring here in July, the Kings Mountain tourists were enjoying 45-95 degree weather in Australia. Most Aussies have never seen earmuffs or snowplows and don't own a pair of gloves.

Betty Gamble's sister, Jo Bowen, noted that on July 15th in Sydney, Australia it was 54 degrees and the next day 72 degrees.

"We had to pack summer and winter clothes but we didn't mind," said Betty, who said they found it easy to get around-by plane, train, tour bus, trams, or monorail and the Aussies speak the same language, although the local group said they were ribbed about their Southern accent. A dollar is a dollar, although ours is worth 28 cents more. The best way to see Australia is on a guided tour and the local group were the only Americans in the group with delightful Southern accents.

Chole Sparks kept a daily log during the trip and all the group brought back pictures, slides and mementos of opal necklaces.

Chole said the visit to the sheep ranch on July 18 was a unique part of the trip where they saw sheep shearing and wool baled with the aid of sheep dogs rounding up the sheep. Another unique part of the trip was riding Ozar, the camel, on July 22. Gamble described her ride on the back of a camel as "super" but Chole said "The bad part was getting up and down." Australia exports more camels than any other country in the world, mines opals, and is known internationally for its food and wines. The morning flight on July 22 to Alice Springs also took them on a tour of the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the only medical facilities available to the whole area, some isolated and remote,



**WORLD TRAVELERS ALL SMILES**-These world travelers from Kings Mountain are already preparing for next year's vacation after returning from a fabulous trip to Australia. From left, Jo Ann Bowen, Betty Gamble, Chole and Herman Sparks; back row, Peggy Baird and Jessie Collins. Mrs. Collins and Mrs. Gamble have taken vacations together for a dozen years. All the group are long-time friends and Mrs. Gamble and Mrs. Bowen are sisters.



**BEAUTIFUL ELLERBY CREEK GORGE**-The Kings Mountain visitors to Australia got up early and toured by air, sea and bus to see many of the beautiful sights of Australia. Walking and hiking, they saw some of the most beautiful scenery in the world.



**CLIMBING A MOUNTAIN**-The Kings Mountain vacationers didn't quite make it to the top of this tall peak but they got plenty of exercise during their recent vacation trip to Australia.

and comprises 14 bases from which its air-borne doctors serve the inhabitants of two-thirds of the continent and Tasmania. Its 33 aircraft fly over five million miles each year, bringing medical attention to more than 100,000 patients of whom over 9,000 are transported to hospitals.

The tour included Melbourne's famous landmarks, including Melbourne University, Parliament House and the state government offices, Fitzroy Gardens, residential sections and Royal Botanical Gardens. The school teachers met students who wear uniforms year-round and they noted that the speed limit is open and that motorists drive on the "wrong side of the road."

...the bad part (about the camel ride) was getting up and down.  
-Chole Sparks

Betty photographed the Flying Penquins Parade for her slide presentation she plans to show to the Woman's Club. Chole said the penquins leave their burrows about two hours before dawn for a day-long swim in the ocean. At dusk they return from their swim while brighter floodlights illuminate them as they waddle ashore.

"There was something to do each day all day long from about 6 a.m. until about 10 p.m. at night but we loved it," said Herman, who noted that a fun excursion for him was climbing a third of the way up Ayers Rock after traveling the rugged outbank via the Finke River and Elunda from Alice Springs. It was "Bush Night" in the Australian bush after a full day to Western MacDonnell Ranges and Standley Chasm and the entertainment included a meal typical of campfire fare, talks of the outbank and aboriginal folklore.

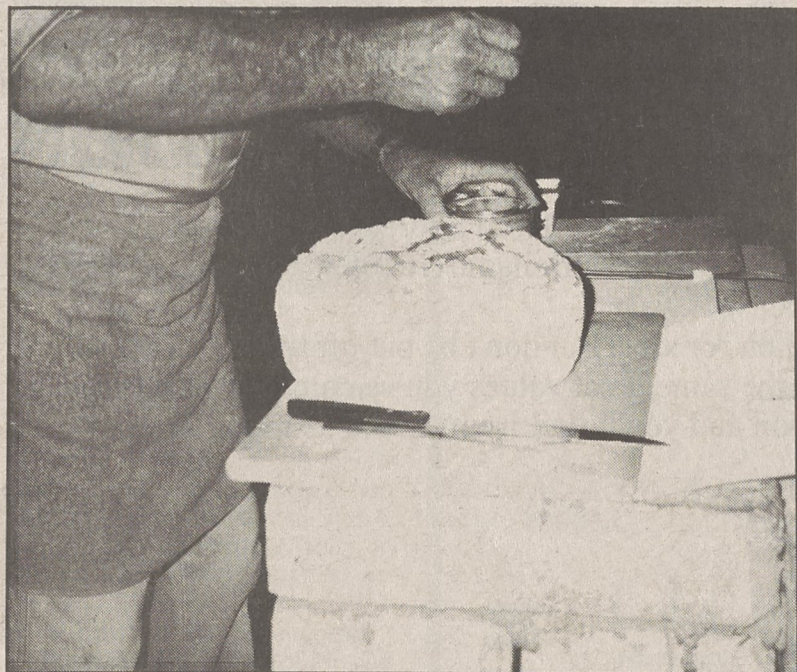
Jessie said a special treat on July 26 was the Greater Barrier reef excursion in Cairns. They took a short coach tour along spectacular tropical coastline to the resort town of Port Douglas, then rode on the fast catamaran, the MY Quicksilver, to Agincourt Reef, on the outer edge of Australia's famous Great Barrier Reef. They enjoyed coral viewing from the underwater observatory, cruising among the coral gardens in a modern sub-sea viewer.

Chole said that on day 15 of the trip they took the railroad tour to Kuranda for magnificent scenery and lush rain forests, where they ate on the train from fine china and linen cloths in a lavish setting.

Flying United Airlines from Charlotte to Chicago to San Francisco and then direct from Los Angeles to Sydney, they crossed the International Dateline. On the return trip, they departed Sydney at 1 p.m. on Sunday, July 29, flew to New Zealand, then to Honolulu, arriving in Hawaii on July 29 at 5 a.m. Honolulu time, when they had left Sydney at 8 p.m. "We lost a day going over and then gained on the return trip but the time difference kept us in a tailspin," laughed Herman.

Sydney Harbor and Opera House, the American Embassy in Canberra, the Melbourne Art Center, learning to throw boomerangs, and meeting the native Aussies were all sights that Herman and Chole Sparks say they will long remember, although they have traveled together to Europe, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Niagara Falls and Canada since their retirement and joined Gamble, Baird, Collins and Bowen for summer trips to Italy and Hawaii. Collins and Gamble have also seen Alaska, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Nova Scotia but Australia was a unique experience.

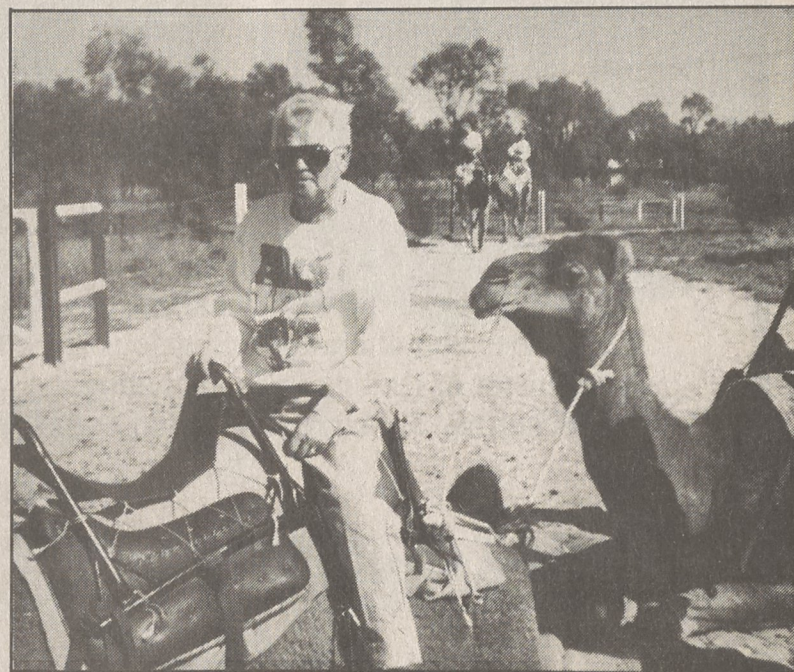
"Traveling is fun anywhere you go when you have good friends to be with and I find something great about every trip I make. I hope all of us can live our dream to see the world," said Gamble, who is already getting travel brochures for next summer's get-away.



**BREAD COOKED ON AN OPEN FIRE**-Kings Mountain vacationers to Australia ate bread cooked on an open fire during their tour of Bush Country at an "outback" dinner.



**ANIMALS WERE EVERYWHERE**-Chole Sparks said a favorite time during her Australian vacation was petting the animals. "We just had a fabulous trip," she said.



**CAMEL RIDING IN AUSTRALIA**-Herman Sparks found camel riding one of the highlights of his recent vacation trip to Australia. Other members of the Kings Mountain party are behind the caravan, Mrs. Sparks said it was "rough riding."