

RICON 23 – MY CONVENTION ADVENTURE

So, I wasn't going to miss out on experiencing an International Rotary Convention in my own backyard, the question was where to stay and how to get there. And while I was working this out, an Ad appeared in the District Rotary Classifieds that changed my journey into an adventure. I hadn't even heard of the Recreational Vehicle Fellowship of Rotarians until then.

A couple of weeks later I was a member of the RVFR Southern Zone and booked on their Melbourne Convention '23 Muster, let the adventure begin!!



I headed off on the 29th May, destination Braybrook Melbourne, arriving on the 30th to meet up with muster organiser, John Spath, as well as most of the 53 Rotarians, partners and friends, who drove or flew in over the next couple of days (with some of them joining and leaving throughout the trip). Our amazing group included 7 Canadians, 8 Americans, 2 English, 2 South Africans as well as 24 from New South Wales, 5 from ACT, 1 from Queensland and 4 South Australians (2 of us from 9510). After airport pickups, motorhome collections and stocking of provisions, our International guests were set for the trip and on May 3rd a total of 44 Rotarians and 24 vehicles hit the road.

One of the most important events of muster is happy hour, yes, there may be wine involved, but it's actually our very necessary briefing for the next day's travel plans (and a fair bit of socialising).

Our itinerary was a loop through Victoria and South Australia returning in time for Convention attendance. Each leg we were divided into travel groups of a few vehicles. Our trip included stopovers in Lorne, Port Campbell, Port Fairy, Mt Gambier, Kingston SE, Victor Harbor, West Beach (Adelaide), Renmark, Mildura, Swan Hill, Echuca, Bendigo, Ballarat and then back at Braybrook, Melbourne.

It was not only a chance to showcase both South Australia and Victoria to our international guests, but for the rest of us to enjoy it as well. It was the opportunity to meet fellow Rotarians and learn what the differences and similarities were between the Rotary clubs and Districts we belonged to. Build new friendships across states and oceans. Meet fellow Rotarians in many of our destinations, attend their meetings and see their club passions and projects. A fellowship that extended beyond just the RVFR members.

I could tell you about all our destinations, but really the most important part was the people I met and the friendships made, with plans already being made for when we meet again.

We arrived back in Melbourne on May 24th with some heading to hotels for the convention, others having to head off, and the rest of us staying on at Braybrook to attend the Convention. My bonus was my daughter flying in to stay with me and attending the Convention and meeting the RVFR's too.

Catching buses, trains & trams, dodging roadworks, getting to meet with fellow Rotarians of the world, socialising, seeing the many passions of Rotarians in the House of Friendship, attending events, presentations, hearing the stories of Rotarians and learning so much more about the organisation I belong to it was inspiring.

And I got to have an adventure just getting there.....finally arriving home on June 4th, what an amazing 5 weeks of Rotary! Proving sometimes taking the longer road means you gain so much more.

And finally a special thanks to muster boss John Spath and his great team of helpers who had been planning this adventure for more than 2 years, an outstanding success. Thanks for having me along.

Helen Marshall, Blakiston Nairne Rotary Club, RVFR

And hey, if you're interested in becoming a part of RVFR and expanding the membership in our district have a look on the Recreational VehicleFellowship of Rotarians website www.rvfr-aus.org.au and let me know by emailing me on hmarshall@internode.on.net