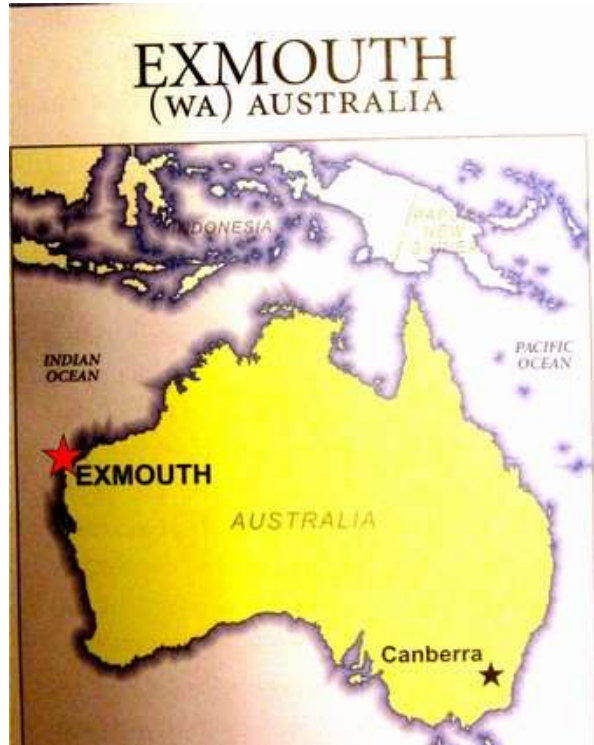


**Exmouth, Australia – Day 40 Nov. 06:**

At sunrise the Amsterdam was entering the broad entrance to Exmouth Gulf on the western coast of Australia. It was a fine day with a light breeze, morning temperatures in the 60s and broken clouds overhead. About 9:30 the Amsterdam dropped anchor in the water a couple miles off of Town Beach in Exmouth, Australia. The map on the right shows the location of Exmouth on the continent of Australia.

Exmouth is a town on the west side of Exmouth Gulf which is aligned in a north-south direction on the western coast of Australia as illustrated in the photo below taken from space and obtained from Google Earth.



Exmouth has a rather unusual history in that it was a planned community established fairly recently in 1962 as part of an Australian and United States government program to set up a Very Low Frequency (VLF) communications Station at the North West Cape. The town has a population of around 2000 people and is developing a tourist industry based on interest in the Cape Range National Park and the spectacular Ningaloo Reef that stretches more than 160 miles along the North West Cape in the Indian Ocean from Point Murat to Amherst Point south of Coral Bay.

After dropping anchor the Amsterdam put tender boats in the water and operations got underway for passengers to spend the day in Exmouth and surrounding Australian environs. The picture on the right shows a view of Exmouth as the first tender boat heads for shore with Australian customs agents who had been on board since Bali to process the immigration papers of Amsterdam passengers in preparation for the visit.



Before leaving the Amsterdam we were able to make contact by cell phone with Steve, back in Tennessee. We always have to go through the learning phase of coordinating the conversation with the time delay involved with around the world radio transmission but we got the hang of it pretty quickly. Fortunately, everything was going well back home, as can be determined by the happy look on Orlin's face in the picture on the left. Steve manages the blog workings from his home. We decided that the generic "At Sea" name for days at sea needed more information to make it easier to find especially interesting events that may be discussed on those days. We'll be working on that change in format.



We got ready to go ashore and caught one of the early tender boats carrying tables, trash cans and other supplies needed by the staff at the boat landing. The tender boat landing was on a fairly new floating dock that was home to many large pleasure boats of various kinds, as shown in the photo on the left.



Barbara Haenni, the Holland America Travel Guide, had described Exmouth in her presentation on the ship and we planned a simple day of touring on our own in this small town.

We stopped by the terminal building, shown below, and bought a bottle of water. Cruise Director, Gene Young, had warned us all that only unopened commercial bottles of water



would be allowed on shore by the strict agricultural quarantine laws. Also there was not to be any fresh fruit, sandwiches and the like taken to shore from the ship. The Australian officials have the authority to fine violators on the spot so we weren't taking any chances.

A map of Exmouth is shown below with the highlights of our visit called out. There was a free shuttle bus but it was a delightful morning for a walk so we hiked, along with many other Amsterdam passengers, the approximate 1.5 mile miles in to town. The route we took is indicated by the white arrows on the map. Later in the day there was a good deal of discussion among the walkers that the route was a mile or two longer than Barbara had indicated in her Exmouth presentation. However, we scaled the route on a satellite image of Exmouth and think the 1.5 mile estimate is correct.



In the parking lot of the marina in front of the terminal building was a sign inviting us to visit the Community Market. Barbara Haenni had mentioned this local event that takes place on Sundays so we already had it on our list of attractions.



We passed our friend, also named Barbara, seen posing in the picture on the left. She had an aggressive agenda lined out for her day that would include exploring the Ningaloo Coral Reef.

We started our trek into town, taking pictures along the way. The first curiosity was this warning sign making hazards of fooling around on the breakwater entirely the responsibility of the fool. It was humorous to see wording normally restricted to microscopic legal fine print boldly displayed in a large enamel sign.



Our walk took us along paved sidewalks past several housing developments that varied between neglected and fairly well maintained.



There had been significant investment in the infrastructure of roads, sidewalks, and utilities and like investors

everywhere, they were looking for some return. Real estate sale signs were prominently displayed and road signs were crafted to grab your attention.



Although it seemed like a sandy and arid place there was a variety of flowering plants to admire along the way, as shown below.



As we approached the Community Market a friendly Aussie named Stewart guessed we were not locals and we struck up a conversation. He welcomed us to Exmouth and left no doubt he was proud of his community.



The Community Market had a variety of new and used items for sale by individuals set up in areas roped off on the grass of Murdoch Park. We would probably call it a “Swap Meet” or “Flea Market” back in the US.

Below are some scenes from the market area.



This lady singer and a guitar player provided the live music promised by the sign we had seen down by the boat landing.





This organic coffee company booth at the market and a nearby recycling display suggested that there is support for environmental activity in the community.



A group of young boys looking for more excitement were snapping bull whips as shown in the picture on the right. At one point a boy held a stick in his mouth while his partner plucked the stick away with the flick of his bull whip. The adults in the area didn't seem to think this trick was anything unusual. We didn't ask for a repeat



performance although these wild Australian boys appeared willing to try it again.



Our friends, Larry and Carol had also walked in from the boat landing and were lounging on the grass taking in the Community Market scene.

Barbara's shopping genes were fully activated by the market place. She found some tee shirts produced by local artists. Those shirts were soon safely liberated from their display racks. We got pictures of the artists as shown here.



When it appeared that we had exhausted the possibilities of the

Community Market we walked past the Visitor Centre Building and on in to town. Our friends, Esther and Bob, were waiting for the shuttle bus at the Visitor Center.



With a stroke of luck we passed a gasoline station on the last leg of our walk into Exmouth town center. This allowed us to add another data point to our international study of gas prices, as shown by the sign on the left.

The prices are in Australian cents per liter. The top price is for high octane gas and the bottom price is for regular gas. The middle price is for a liter of diesel.

Based on the exchange rate of \$0.95 Australian for \$1.00 USD and the approximate 4 liters per gallon, it would cost about \$5.04 USD per gallon of regular gas at this station today.

Along the path to town were a few more pretty flowers decorating the pathway.



In addition we were able to record the visit of Barbara's library card to Exmouth with this picture on the right.



Then we came to the time-capsule of Exmouth, shown on the right. Sometimes these capsules are enclosed in the cornerstone of a large building but the Exmouth people put their time-capsule in a monument all by itself. Hopefully those who open the capsule in 2067 will be happy and living in a thriving economy. From conversations with local people and the obvious land development along the sea shore they have a lot of optimism about the future.



On the subject of time-capsules and things of historic significance, one of Exmouth's main streets showed us an item that we hadn't seen for several years. There were two nicely maintained pay telephone booths ready for the next caller, as shown on the left. While in Singapore we commented on seeing the polished marble and glass remains of a former pay phone booth. Here in Exmouth we reconnected with a past era before the cell phone had replaced the handy roadside pay phone.

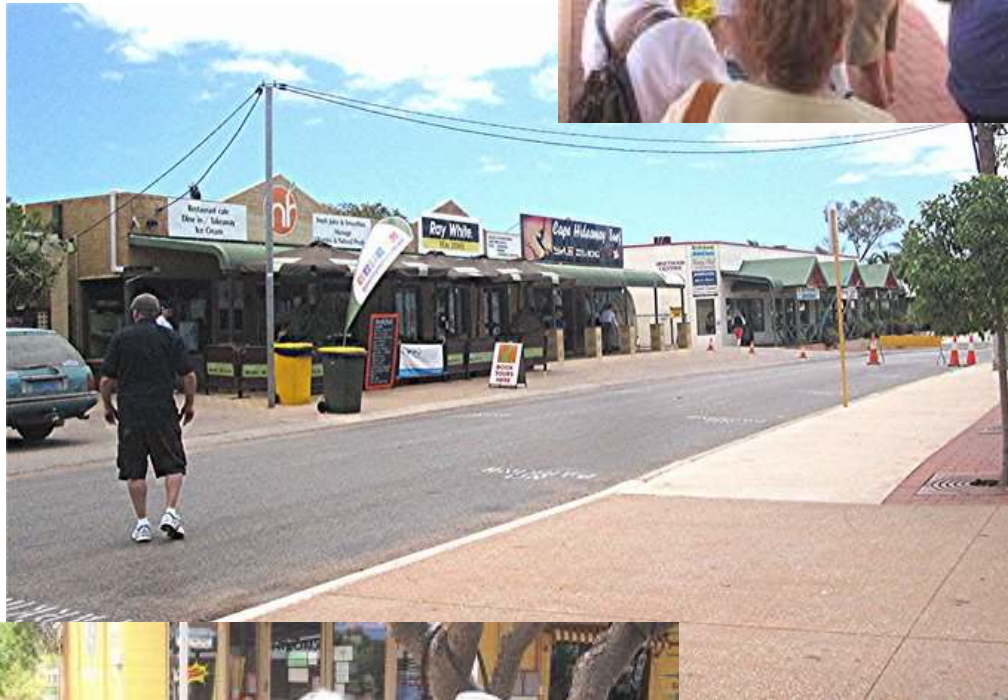


The downtown of Exmouth was typical of many small towns. Stores providing the essentials were there but mostly closed on this fine Sunday morning. A grocery store was open and we saw the first Christmas items of this Christmas Season for sale there, as shown in this snapshot on the right.



A real estate office window had some homes posted for sale. From the pictures they appeared to be like those we saw on our walk this morning. As with any real estate you would have to see the property and know the location to compare. However, from the descriptions of 2 and 3 bedroom, 1 and 2 bath homes at \$275,000 to \$640,000 USD the properties seemed on the pricey side to us.

The shuttle bus pick-up spot for return to the boat landing was in a shaded area that was part of a complex of stores at the center of town. A crowd of Amsterdam passengers had gathered and we got in line for the next shuttle bus. While waiting we took a couple more pictures of the general scene around us.



Barbara saw our friend, Sherry, and sat down to discuss today's adventures in Exmouth.

The shuttle bus soon picked us up and got us back to the tender boat landing. Some Amsterdam passengers had gotten a late start so they were in the line of people waiting for the shuttle bus headed for city center. However, we caught the next tender and were back on board the Amsterdam by 1pm.

About 5:30 the Amsterdam pulled up the anchor and we got underway. The ship first sailed north for a few miles. When she had proceeded far enough to clear Exmouth Cape we turned left and then headed south toward Fremantle and Perth down on the southwest corner of Australia.