

# Field's and D'Alton's Journey 2000

## Singapore, France, Germany, Canada and USA.



Beautiful and historic France  
and part of Germany.

This is a PDF

Big and scenic USA  
and Canada.



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This is our true story of our journey overseas 2000.

This journey included our daughter Maria and her two children, Grace who was nine years old and Christian who turned seven while we were in France. It was the fulfillment of one of Marie's (my wife) promises to take Grace to Disney Land. Maria's husband David stayed home to "hold the fort". Our other family, our son John and wife Lyn with their children, Joshua and Laena also kept an eye on things while we were away. Special thanks to Lyn who was our gardener for the time.

On Maria, Grace and Christian's return home, Maria looked after our business affairs such as paying some bills. Thanks Maria.

Some people may have read our previous book, "*Our European, U.K. and Ireland Journey 1997*" so may notice a few similarities in this one. We did our planning using the usual books, Internet, video tapes etc. This time Maria added to the gathered information.

Maria and the children (the Fields) departed Brisbane with us on the 14th of March to arrive in Paris. We rented a car and both of us took turns to drive which was great for me as I was a passenger/navigator which relieved Marie of her usual job.

The Fields departed Paris to fly home on Thursday the 6th of April and arrived safely home the next day via Sydney.

Marie and I then flew to the USA and were met by our friends David and Sylvia Groom at the Orlando Airport which is in Florida. After being in their excellent care for a week we rented another car and drove north to Buffalo, near the Niagara Falls.

We flew to Seattle and rented another car (our third) and drove into Canada to the Buchart Gardens Near Vancouver, Canada, then south to San Francisco. We flew to Hawaii, stayed five days then home via Sydney. We returned home on the 2nd of June 2000.

As usual we wrote lots of notes for this book. The previous book that many relatives and friends enjoyed reading was instrumental in helping some to do their own European travelling. We hope this applies to this book.

## Foreword

Marie inserts pages of the main text in the photo albums and so some people read it by viewing the albums. The same will be done this time.

This time I will be adding colour for the flags, maps and so on.

As before, if anyone would like some information we will be happy to provide it. We keep lots of information that is not included in the books. Again I will E-mail text to inquirers as required.

Our E-mail address is:-

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Marie and I enjoyed a previous trip to the USA which was in 1988, again visiting our Florida friends. We did not publish a book for it although Marie did type a short story and those pages were inserted in our photo albums. So I will be mentioning that 1988 trip, comparing various things.

The **Overview** section is just that, for people who don't want to read the main text.

The **Statistics** section I hope to make will be about our cars and whatever I can include.

Our previous "*Our European, U.K. and Ireland Journey 1997*" book was read by quite a few people which encouraged me to publish this one but with the addition of some colour.

Marie and I hope that you enjoy reading this book and find it useful if you are planning a similar journey. We hope the reader does not become confused between the similar names of Marie (my darling wife) and Maria (our daughter).

July 2000.

# The travellers and where they travelled.

The five of us in France and Germany.



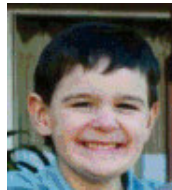
Maria, our daughter and co-driver



Nanna and Poppi.

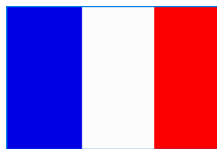


Grace aged nine and Christian aged six who turned seven in France.



I dedicate this book to Grace Jacinta Field, one of our Granddaughters.

I thank Grace for allowing me to use some of her text in the book.



We arrived in Paris then drove to Disney Paris which is about 30km east.

We then travelled eastward to the region called "Alsace".

A map is on page ten of Alsace and other regions

We then left Alsace travelling westward to re-enter Paris.

# Overview of our Journey

## Over there

What a different world "over there" such a great opportunity for Grace and Christian to learn so much, more than for the same time at school. Marie and I were so happy that Maria did not want to go to the USA, to Disney as per Marie's dream. What a fantastic chance to revisit France, beautiful France. Maria did learn French at High School so she swatted up on the language. I just refreshed my French words for road signs and so on. Grace even learnt a few words. We all spoke a little French. Contrary to what some people say, French people do appreciate foreigners trying to speak their language.

As before, much of Our Journey centres around us driving, the roads, highways, hotels etc. Driving on the other side of the road is not for everyone. Some Australians think that they could not cope with this let alone the amount of traffic. I suggest people should attempt it to at least find out. As I always say, one has to multiply every thing by ten as a rule of thumb. Ten times as much traffic, ten times as many roads, ten times as many highways, ten times as many people. But as I have said before drivers/people are much more patient, more courteous which makes them better drivers. Australian vehicle drivers are worse than those in Europe, UK, Canada and the USA. The countries we have visited in the last twelve years.

Of course there are exceptions but they are very rare. We think we saw only two road accidents on this journey. What I am trying to impress on everyone who would like to drive themselves *over there, on the other side of the road*, it's not as difficult as many say. Maria drove for the first time on the other side of the road on the second day without much trouble and she loved it except for the busy cities, so I usually took over the driving.

## Our cars

We arranged in Australia to rent a station wagon in France which we thought would have been about the same size as a Holden or Ford. Remember there were five of us with all our luggage. As it turned out our rental German Opel station wagon was a bit smaller so making things a little difficult. Anyway we coped. Marie and I always give our rental and lease cars a nickname which is a nice way to refer to them.

Again the RACQ was of no help in regards driving *on the other side of the road*. We did purchase in Brisbane a Michelin map of part of France which cost almost AUD\$20 which are 75% cheaper if bought in France. Our Florida friends, David and Sylvia got us the USA ones from their AAA motoring office for free.

We suggest people carry a compass which is essential at times. Being in the northern hemisphere can be confusing. In any case in the USA and Canada road signs do show directions in N, S, E or West.

In some states in the USA and Canada the vehicle headlights must be switched on if it is raining or foggy. New cars such as our two USA rentals use the new lighting system whereby the main headlights are on all the time but only at reduced brilliance.

We pre-booked some accommodation being the stopover in Singapore, the Mercure Hotel at CDG Airport, the Santa Fe Hotel at Disney Paris and three separate weeks at resorts for Marie and I in the USA. The rest was obtained as we needed on the day.

## Learn some of the language

Again Marie carried some Australian kangaroo and koala stick pins and koala clipons to give to people who were very helpful or pleasant. She also gave away some little books about Queensland as necessary.

In the USA and Canada my darling navigator had no trouble reading maps on their smooth road and highways. In Australia she gets carsick due to the rough surfaces and the windy roads.

## Bottled water

Nowhere did we buy bottled water, nor did we boil it, but if the reader wanted to a small immersion heater will do the job. We again used a small 240volt immersion heater to make tea and coffee and cook up tins of ravioli, meat balls, vegetable, soup and so on. That was my job.

In France the usual trouble to find toilets was with us again. A good example of that was the public toilets across the big street from the Arc de Triomphe was closed from 11.30pm to 1.30pm. In Canada and the USA there is no problem. Where there is an eating place the **bathroom/s** will be closeby.

By the way, the water emptying down a wash basin plug hole does swirl in clockwise direction, believe me!

The Internet is very much in use particularly in the US. Even Marie made a note in her travel book about "everyone seems to have a Web page".

## Television

In France there were British BBC and US CNN TV channels.

In the US there are scores of TV channels/stations free to air and cable. In some states there were about 120 on the TV programme page to choose from, too many. There is one channel just for weather, a couple of Christian/Gospel channels, Discovery channels, old movie channels and so on, similar to here but many more.

It was so disappointing that there was not much news from outside the US even from their bordering countries, Canada and Mexico. We did not come across any real local town or county news.

News for their own farmers and so on. They really are very inward looking people. The big news in the US was about the little Cuban boy, Elian Gonzalas which was repeated and repeated.

In France there was the BBC and CNN to choose from whereas in the US they seem to rely on CNN although at our Florida friend's place they have Deutsch Wella (DW) German news, the same we receive on SBS and Briz 31.

As for radio, well we hardly heard any of our vintage or decent music except for a few occasions.

For me there was some country music in Tennessee but the best was the 600AM station in Vancouver, Canada with mostly music of the 50's to 70's. As I mentioned in our 1997 Journey book, AM stations are closing down and more transmissions are on FM which is to be expected

In Nashville, Tennessee we visited the War Museum which was very good. I asked the man at the information desk did he know what significance the 25th of April was to Australia. Sadly he said "no I don't" So I told him a bit about what happened at Gallipoli during WWII.

In France we had the usual troubles finding food and open restaurants. Even at our big Mercure Hotel near the CDG Airport we had to wait until 7.30pm before we could have dinner. They just don't allow for people needing food at odd hours so as to catch airlights. No such trouble in the US though.

By the way, my very brief description of the USA is:

- 1 Similar to Australia but bigger,
- 2 Vehicle drivers better than Australians,
- 3 Too much food and too much waste.

In contrast to things being closed in France (and Europe in general as per our 1997 journey) American people seem to be more industrious, perhaps work harder, reaching for that extra dollar. Even on their Memorial Day the 29th of May, which is a bit like our Anzac Day, most places were open except big businesses such as banks. Even Easter is treated like just another day. While I'm talking about Easter, their Easter seems to revolve around Easter Bunnies and children searching for gifts, the real meaning about the crucifixion is hardly mentioned.

## The US economy

The US economy is in good shape with unemployment very low, perhaps 2%. People were so surprised when we told them that our Australian economy was so weak. We saw hundreds of signs, "Help Wanted" in various places.

One sign was even a neon sign. Construction of buildings and roads was everywhere. When they build a highway they don't fiddle around. Big wide highways, exits and thick road beds. We assume this accounts for the smooth roads and highways.

Another criticism of this great country is the large amounts of waste, water, ice, food, electricity etc. We saw many electric fans revolving in places where it was unnecessary such as in outside areas, walkways and patios, also lights glowing in the sunlight. To be fair though, if Australia had a big population with magnitudes of machinery, buildings and size of country we might do the same.

## The US people and food

We were amazed by how many fat, no the better word is obese, people we saw in the US, mainly women. Many who could not sit in an ordinary chair with arms.

It's no wonder with what they eat and drink. Even children from about eight years on have fat legs and arms, bigger than mine. The over abundance of fast food outlets with big meals and bottomless cups of drinks doesn't give them much of a chance to eat less. Even the better class of restaurants don't offer many vegetables. Onions, redbeet, cabbage, beans are almost non-existent.

Even David and Sylvia told us that the restaurants compete by serving bigger steaks and meals. The most wholesome meals we had were Chinese meals with plenty of vegetables as in Australia. I took photos of some fat people to prove our point. There were less such people the further we ventured north, but still too many in our view.

On our holiday to the USA in 1988 we reported that as a rule of thumb, prices of most things were about half of the prices of the items in Australia. Now the difference is smaller, maybe 20% cheaper so I suppose that is the new global economy at work.

## Sunshine and blue skies

Similarly to our previous journeys, bright sunshine and really blue skies is almost non-existent. Even Florida and Hawaii is in this category. The bluest sky was in Canada, when it wasn't overcast but the sun wasn't brilliant.

In the US if one requires a newspaper then one could be purchased at a footpath coin box. But there is usually only about five choices, USA Today and the local state city paper such as the Washington Post or similar. We did not see any newsagents as we know them but we did come across one in Alexandria in Maryland (MD) which is the state next to Washington D.C. It was as big as our big newsagents and even sold some papers from other countries and US ones printed in other languages. Unbelievable!

Australians are avid readers.

## Travellers cheques

A month or so before our departure the Australian dollar (AUD) lost more value and so our AUD\$1 bought only US\$0.58 and AUD\$1 bought FF3.8 (French Francs). We purchased Thomas Cook Travellers cheques in both currencies.

We also had two plastic Visa cards which is essential when renting a vehicle. A warning!

The US\$500 Thomas Cook cheques were too high in value as we could not cash them in the US even in banks in San Francisco. We had to go to a Thomas Cook office in that city where their highest denomination they would normally cash was US\$250 but he did cash our US\$500 one. The man told us that Americans don't want to handle high value cheques so US\$25 and US\$50 should be used instead. How pitiful of the US. We have never had any troubles such as this in Europe, even in little Greece. So be warned!

### Harvey World Travel' sPhone Away Card

Another warning is about using Harvey World Travel' sPhone Away Card which is similar to the Telstra card. This is a ' sPhone card that one buys in various values, in our case we chose AUD\$50.

One goes to a ' sPhone in almost any country, after getting into the local ' sPhone system for a dial tone, which in some countries is a drama in itself, one then dials a toll free number for the country one is in. On both our 1997 journey and this journey the number for France was incorrect. It wasn't until about the sixth day when I went into a French Telecom office that a woman who could speak good English helped me. She dialed the special Harvey World Travel number and I spoke to an Australian man who told me that the 1800 number was incorrect and so gave me the correct one. I think that is an unforgivable situation. Also most public ' sPhone are card operated ones.

### Film

We took twenty four rolls of 35mm 36exp 400ASA print film and four rolls of 35mm 36 exp 400ASA slide film and came back home with two print rolls and one slide roll. We had them developed and printed on our return home.

We suggest that people do the same as the processing is no cheaper over there and in any case packets of prints do weigh more than rolls of film. I have a special lead bag that I carry the rolls of film in which most say is unnecessary for lower speed film such as 400ASA but I suppose it's better to take extra precautions

We can't comment much on Singapore and Canada as we spent only a few days in each country.

### The Northern Hemisphere

I think that God's creation of the southern and northern hemispheres is a fantastic feature, if I can put it that way. I know many/most people don't put much emphasize on it or even notice the differences.

To me it adds another dimension to travelling, the shadows being on the southern side of objects, of course in the northern hemisphere. Also the moon being in the south. There is one photo in the albums of a small moon during a sunset in France.

There is a small problem for me though. I sometimes become confused as to what direction I am travelling, driving or walking. I certainly need my compass then, whereas Marie doesn't have the same problem which is an advantage.

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## Brisbane with USA System

### The US is a car drivers paradise

As I have said before, the US is a car drivers paradise so I am going to attempt to translate their road/highway system to Australia.

I'm going to take the reader on a ride through a city, not an American one but Brisbane. This is what I would expect if Brisbane was a city in the US. Actually there is a Brisbane in the US, I think near Washington DC.

It will be as though Marie and I were driving from about Bundaberg to Toowoomba. I will apply most of the details to the journey.

As the Pacific Highway from Qld to the NSW Victoria border runs in a north-south direction it is denoted by an odd number, in this case 1 (one). Its number 1 is its Interstate highway number because it runs through the other states. Its Queensland state highway is number 25. Some interstate and state highways have the two numbers if they share the same ground. The Interstate sign (I1) is in the shape of a shield, a red bar at the top, a blue background and white text. The state highway (25) would have black figures on a white background.

As we travel on I1/25 the maximum speed varies between 100km/h or 120km/h, with two or sometimes three lanes in both directions. It's a divided highway and some times we cannot see the other direction north bound lanes because there are many trees on the dividing part. We just passed a sign telling us that there is a rest area or restrooms area approaching 2km away. A bit further on another sign warns us that the next such stop is 35km further south so we aim to stop at that one.

Overhead we see a small aeroplane which is checking on the I1/25 for speedsters, accidents and the like. If we do need to have a pit stop there are plenty of exits off the I1/25 to such places. A big sign board about 5mt square tells us about petrol stations, another kilometre or so further on another big sign tells us about accommodation and another one further on shows us the food places that we can stop at.

These signs show the company logo as well as the words in English so it's easier to note the places by the logos rather than the words. Remember there are a lot of highway/road signs to contend with. We decide to get more gas... er petrol and there is a Texaco as mentioned on the sign and is at exit 184. This also tells us that we are 184 km on I1 from the point where it crosses the border of NSW and Qld.

We exit at 184 and on the way down the ramp there are more signs that direct us to various petrol stations, food and accommodations. The Texaco sign points to the left. We stop at the traffic lights because this is a busy area. We turn left and drive into the Texaco station. Marie says she will go to the bathrooms/restrooms while I get the gas. There are a few choices at the pump, I can pay by credit card, pay before I pump or pay after.

I wait for Marie to return before I go in to pay then I also use the restroom. Most of these petrol stations also sell food, papers, etc and have a telephone, (as now in Australia).

We drive out and stop at the traffic lights then see the I1 South and I1 North signs, we go straight ahead under the I1 and don't have to stop at the lights again to continue on I1 south turning left up onto the on ramp. I say to Marie that if the sign for the north read "Townsville" instead of I1 North we would not know which way to go because we would not know where Townsville was. This would also apply for the southern direction if the sign was Caboolture instead of I1 South.

There is the usual lane to pick up speed before merging into the traffic, this one is about 200m long.

We are approaching Gympie with many more exit signs to various parts of the town. The traffic runs smoothly as most drivers leave the right most lane free and only use it to pass slower vehicles such as ours. There are some cars, not semi-trailer trucks, that are travelling over the speed limit, perhaps 130km/h but it's not really necessary as the highway system is so good. Using the car's overdrive also makes driving much easier.

Even when a big truck does follow us, he keeps well back as a rule and gives me the feeling that he is not aggressive as Australian drivers, not pushing us off the road.

At times we see rather small roads only 100m away running parallel to I1 and sometimes passing under it. These would be older state roads and highways which are kept in excellent condition and repair. The speed limit on these is about 90km/h.

A big exit is to 58 which being an even number tells us that it's a west-east state highway with black text on a white background. If we wanted to take 58 we would exit here then there would be another intersection with two signs, 58 East and 58 West perhaps without any town names mentioned. So easy.

We soon exit at the previously mentioned Rest Stop Area which has room for about twenty semi-trailers, restrooms/toilets, and a Burger King. We go to the Burger King for a tea and coffee. At some of the tables there are special data/Internet 'phones.

As we leave and run up onto the on ramp we see a similar Rest Stop on the other side of the I1 for north bound traffic.

At about Aspley there are now three lanes each way on I1 and still a divided highway. Also signs to the Brisbane Airport and signs to I9/23 which this time mentions Warwick and Melbourne. This sign also tells us that it is 10km away. At Chermiside the I1/25 is now elevated above ground with four lanes both ways. There are big exits to Albion and Windsor. We need to keep heading to I9/23 as our destination is Toowoomba. The I9/23 is a north-south highway so when we reach that exit we need to take I9/23 South, simple.

At this point we switch the radio-cassette player off so we can concentrate, we also have our spectacles on. Near the RBHospital exit 132 is to Fortitude Valley, a west-east road. At Water Street I1 South is straight ahead with the Water Street exit being 130 meaning it's 130km from the Qld/NSW border. I move into one of the two right-hand side lanes which leads to I9/23 without any car horns tooting at us. Very patient drivers. Remember this eight lane highway is elevated so traffic runs quickly without any side streets and traffic lights.

We are now on I9/23 to Toowoomba and pass exits 129, 128 127 which lead into downtown Brisbane. The exit 126 at the Normanby lead onto 103, a south-north road to Ferny Grove and 125 exit for Roma Street. At about Milton Road we are happily moving on I9/23 and from our elevated position we see the railway line below us.

Any shops along the old Milton Road have all been demolished so that this highway is flat and wide. After a few minutes we are at Jindalee where the elevated I9/23 is now at ground level. I9/23 is also called the Hume Highway further south.

When we are at Goodna a sign "To 22 5km" tells us that another state highway is approaching and by reading our map we learn that it is a west-east highway because its number is an even one, also it runs through Toowoomba and further west which is what we need to take.

Just in case people are not sure if they are on the correct highway, there are signs denoting the highway/road number, in this case for us, 22. We just passed another emergency telephone which is operated by solar cells.

We soon reach the exit for 22 which is numbered 195 because it is 195 km from where I9/23 crosses the NSW/Qld border. As this is a populated area 22 is three lanes both ways and of course divided. As we skirt Ipswich there are about five exits to Ipswich, two of which are to downtown. The first exit we reach after taking 22 is number 735 which tells us that it's 735km from the most westerly point where 22 commences.

After passing about thirty exits to towns, food, petrol and accommodation places we approach Toowoomba. There were signs since we left Brisbane at various points letting us know how many km it is to Toowoomba.

The 22 up the range has been changed from its old windy path with big sweeping curves and a tunnel to enter Toowoomba on the northern side with various exits leading to it and downtown.



We take one to reach our destination.

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I hope this gives the reader who may not have travelled to the USA and other highly populated countries an idea how our traffic system could be. For the population of Brisbane being almost one million our traffic system should be better than it is, Sydney being an example.

US towns that are smaller than Brisbane with perhaps only 100,000 people do have big traffic systems, similar to my little story above but due to the big population of the US they are able to spend more on the system.

Elevated highways going this way and that way, sometimes two or three layers deep. I assume this is because there is so much traffic flowing through from other places. In my little story at Water Street the I1/25 would swerve around to run over the Story Bridge and another highway exiting going to the Airport, three lanes each way of course.

As it is at present, interstate motorists coming from the Gold Coast who might not take the existing Gateway Bridge highway are confronted with little streets, little signs and local traffic in the Fortitude Valley area.

We do have the N.S.E.W concept denoting our highways but it is not generally understood or used as in the US.

Yes, when we return from these overseas journeys Brisbane seems a little toy town. A little traffic clogged up in little highways and little streets. Oh yes and bad and impatient drivers. Perhaps that' why.

Don' misunderstand me, I don' really mind Brisbane the way it is, but I do pity the plight of the younger generation who have to work with the situation as it is at present.

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JCED. 18 September 2000.

## A few added notes

### Temperatures

I always carry a temperature gauge and where possible and I put it outside in the mornings at about 7am to 8am to get a true figure. This is under each days heading.

Sometimes I took the temperature from the rental car' temperature gauge in *its outside mode* .

Because mercury type temperature gauges are banned on aircraft our gauge is a mechanical type.

### Electric shaver power points

In Europe I managed to find a power outlet somewhere, not usually in the bathroom for my electric shaver. Sometimes I had to squat on the floor as the power socket/outlet was down near the floor. In the USA and Canada there was usually a power socket in the bathroom.

### Grace' Story

Grace made her own little book with very little help so her words are her own. They are so nice and with a child's perspective that I asked her if she would let me include some in this Journey 2000 book. She gave me the OK so I will put them at various places in little boxes.

# France and Germany, here we come.

The first section is for the time with Maria, Grace and Christian. We drove eastward from Paris to Nancy to enter the Alsace area and departed from Metz westward to Paris.

Cyan with arrows is our route, red for night stops and red dots is the French-German border.

