In August 2011, there was a conference in Melbourne, Australia, and Harry and I added a week before the conference to drive around the State of Victoria (and into NSW). It was a highlight of impressive coastal areas, small patches of rainforest, the Grampians, wonderfully sleepy towns with great afternoon teas and morning breakfasts, various gum trees and bushes, the mighty Murray, and – best of all - dingoes. Unfortunately, I made no notes on what people told us and what were hot topics in Australian politics at the time so these notes are from what I remember.

The trip started from the Melbourne airport and went to the coast, first to Apollo Bay where an amazing piece of rainforest is left at Otway NP, and then to Warrnambool past the Twelve Apostles, impressive cliffs sticking out of the ocean. A sunken crater and whales add to the excitement.

After Warrnambool, the road north led through Gariwerd (named Grampians by the British surveyors). To the aboriginal people, this is where in ancestral times, the creator Bunjil took shelter.
From Gariwerd to Wimmera, or Little Desert NP, and to Dimboola for the first night, a flat area with more than 670 species of plants. The Ebenezer Moravian Mission operated from 1859 to 1904 to convert the aborigines. This German protestant church, started by Jan Hus in the 15th century, was involved in missionary work all over the world (e.g. in Surinam and the Caribbean).

Some towns resemble the Western US: wide, dusty main streets, with not much going on. We came through Hopetoun, Patchewollock (‘lots of grass’), Wyperfield NP, Hattah, and finally Mildura, with unexpected palm trees.
After Mildura, we went into New South Wales to visit Mungo NP and Mallee Cliff NP. I had seen beautiful pictures but the reality was much flatter and duller. It turned out this visit ruined a camera because of the dust but it kept working for another few days (fortunately). It was probably not the kind of road the rental car was allowed on either (in hindsight). To Balranald and then Swan Hill on the Murray River. What a lovely landscape!

The towns in this part became more Victorian with lace iron verandas/porches. Castlemain was close to the dingo town, Chewton. I see that in 2017 it still exists. It was the highlight of my visit!

I remember feeling so sad leaving that area and ending our Australian road adventure to return the car and to go to Melbourne. It had been a week of absolute pleasure!