

DRESSAGE PEOPLE

Traveling Down Under

A dressage rider enjoys teaching dressage with Monty Roberts in Australia.

By Charlotte Bredahl-Baker

Charlotte Bredahl-Baker is a U.S. Olympic bronze medalist (1992) and U.S. Equestrian Federation “S” dressage judge. She became an FEI “C” judge at the recent international judges forum in Portugal. In 2008, she accompanied “horse whisperer” Monty Roberts on his training tour through Australia, serving as one of two demonstration riders. In the following excerpt from her travel diary, she shares her adventure.

Courtesy, Charlotte Bredahl-Baker



Sarah Borrey



Left photo: Sarah Borrey (left) and Charlotte Bredahl-Baker in Sydney.

Right photo (from left): Rob Horne, Bredahl-Baker and Monty Roberts

In 1989, Monty Roberts invited my colleague, Kamila DuPont, and me to perform a Grand Prix *pas de deux* at a fundraiser for then-President Reagan. We thought it would be fun and went to the Santa Ynez Valley. We stayed four days with Monty and his wife, Pat, an accomplished artist. Monty showed us around the area. I fell in love with it and decided to stay. That trip was also the start of a long friendship with Monty and Pat. Monty has traveled worldwide demonstrating his non-violent training methods. Recently, he has incorporated more riding into his clinics and, as a result, he asked me to be part of his Australia tour. It sounded like a fun adventure to me, so I said, “Yes.” I love visiting new places, and I always want to support people who promote gentle methods in any discipline. I invited my friend, Sarah Borrey, who helps me with my Web site (bredahldressage.com), to come along.

On August 12, Sarah and I met in Los Angeles and traveled the 14 hours to Melbourne on New Zealand Air (with comfy beds). A driver picked us up and took us to a nice condo (with hotel services). A few days later, we went to the Werribee Equestrian Center, the main show facility in Melbourne, where I met and tried out my demo horse, Victor. He was a 10-year-old Friesian/Thoroughbred cross trained to Prix St. Georges. Owner Sheree McConachy, an amateur rider, has done a good job with him. In the evening, we met Monty and the entire crew of about 10 people—organizers, marketers, cowboys and a well-known Australian trainer named Rob Horne, who specializes in young horses and problem horses. It was a fun and friendly dinner group.

The next day at the venue, I rode Victor again, while Monty tried out his reining demo horse. Victor was testing me a bit in the flying changes. Sometimes, he kicked at my leg and at other times he ignored it altogether. It is always interesting and

challenging to get on a new horse that was trained by somebody else. The busy crew worked hard to set everything up. Getting ready for a weekend symposium is quite a production.

The clinic ran from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The audience came from all disciplines, including reining, jumping, eventing and trail riding. Monty started with the proper handling of young horses and then with problem horses. He did a great job with the ones he had just met. In the afternoon, Rob and Monty began the riding session with basic work for young horses. After Rob was finished, I demonstrated the first stages of training a dressage horse. I worked my way up to lateral work and flying changes and a little pirouette work. I kept it simple, since most people were not dressage riders. The next day was more advanced. Instead of doing single flying changes, I did them down to every two strides.

Most evenings, we had dinner with the crew and, one night, we took Victor's owner and her mom out to dinner. Everybody was wonderful and such fun.

From Melbourne, we flew to Sydney and the next morning we went with Rob and Monty to a beautiful Thoroughbred stable about two hours north—Musko-ka Farm, owned by Wendy and Bob Lapointe. Wendy is a successful race-horse trainer. She showed us Sebring, a 3-year-old that had just sold for \$30 million. (I am in the wrong business!) Monty had worked with their trainer on how to get youngsters into the starting gate. We had a wonderful lunch there and, later in the afternoon, Sarah and I toured around beautiful Sydney by ferry and, of course, went to the Opera House.

Next, Sarah and I flew to Perth on the west coast of Australia (a five-hour flight). Keith Lawrence, who is responsible for promoting Monty in Australia, picked us up and showed us around.

Perth is beautiful with incredible beaches everywhere, and the weather is a bit like Southern California. It looks like San Diego did about 15 years ago. After sightseeing, Keith took us to our next condo/resort home. This place was surrounded by a golf course, and the best part was all of the kangaroos hanging out there. It was so fun to see the little joeys, as they call the babies, hanging out of their mothers' pouches. We also enjoyed watching the young males play fight.

In the evening, I went to meet my next demonstration horse, Donner Armani, an 11-year-old warmblood/Thoroughbred cross. Trained to Grand Prix by his owner, Tyana Lawless, he turned out to be an uncomplicated, well-trained horse. His changes were great, including the ones, and I had a lot of fun riding him.

Sarah and I had free time during the week, so we went to a zoo to see koala bears and kangaroos. We also went to a spa for a massage and facial. It was a real treat, since I never make time to do that at home. In the evening, I rode Armani again, while the crew set up everything at the next venue.

We had another all-weekend demo. Armani was good and handled the crowds of 1,000 people a day without any problem. It was inspiring to see a big crowd for a horse event. Monty really gives people tools to help them with their horses at home. Whenever he works with the problem horses, he accomplishes everything with patience, and repetition. He also communicates clearly—no grey zone. I think the majority of spectators don't have a regular trainer and are really looking for help to make sure they do the right thing.

Sunday evening, we had a big goodbye dinner for the crew and other people involved, including horse owners. The next day, we flew back to Sydney and then Los Angeles. All I can say is, what a fun trip! 🐾