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Australia – what a country! Part II

Maja Brumm

I have been invited to write an article about my time in Australia and I am happy to do it. I will write it in English, obviously. It is also a document of my English after five months in Australia.

Amazing Facts And Survival Tips

I'd recommend to study first and then go travelling... concession cards are so important – you'll get sometimes a discount of 50%. YHA and international students cars count as concessions as well, just try them out. Where do you get discounts? At museums, heritage predicts, or when buying a train ticket or booking a tour etc... Aussies hire (nearly) everything, even machines for the garden! They also recycle everything... except batteries! I had to throw them away....

The weather...

In Australia, the sunset/sunrise is usually between five and seven in the evening/morning... There is no long evening with the warm sun... (missed it a bit). The sunset is very quickly... ten minutes and the sun is gone, ten more, it's completely dark!

Everyone told me it'd be VERY hot down under... well, it is 40 degrees in summer, that's right. BUT the dry air and the breeze (from the sea) cools down a LOT! So, in real, it's 30, maybe a bit hotter. That explains why you have to bring a jacket for the evening. It may have been "40" during the day, the night will be "20" degrees cold...

All over Australia, Darwin and Cairns have the same humidity as Switzerland. I'd recommend to go there in the dry season (winter) as it is comfortable. I can't understand why people said the south-west to be cold and rainy during the winter... Melbourne was very sunny. It also rained, but not so much as I expected. You'll find the cold weather in the mountains.

Australians definitions of "cold", "rainy" and "sunny" are not the same. For example, it rained twice on this day for twenty minutes (in the morning) in Perth. The rest

of the day was sunny. In the evening, everyone complained about the "bad" weather...

Traffic

Wear a helmet – you can be penalised for not wearing one! You can cross the security line (!) when turning off left or right.. Highways are a mixture between "Schnellstrasse" and "Autostrasse" whereas the freeways deserve the translation to "Autobahnen"...

Because everything is so widespread, people go by car (and not by public traffic). As a rule of thumb, everything takes 10-15min. no matter whether by car, by rail or whilst waiting for something (eg at a reception). It is amazing how it works...

Trains don't have a first or second class. It makes it a lot easier with the fares.

Houses...

Windows have to be pushed aside and they always have a mosquito net... You have first to turn on the power before using the powerpoint, because there is an extra switch for it (to save energy)

Food...

The eating habits need some time to get used. The breakfast is okay, but the lunch is very small (most eat at KFC, Hungry Jack's and Co) and often consist of sandwiches, but the dinner is therefore big. I didn't like coz I was always hungry at 4:00pm and dinner was three hours later, so I had to provide a snack for my hungry tummy.

Aussies may have cake for morning tea... If you have a BBQ (barbie, barbeque), you have to bring your own meat and salat and you take the rest home as well!

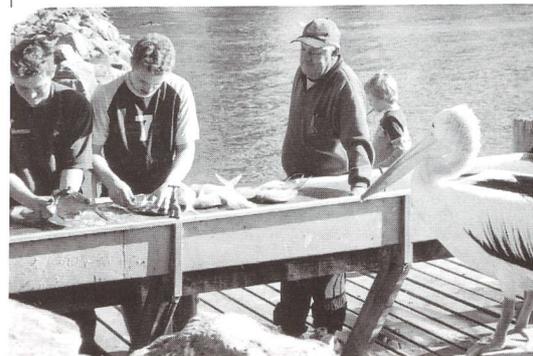
Basically, you get the same food as here, but it tastes differently because of the production conditions and they've got a small choice of fruits (mainly apple, bananas and pears). You often get big meals in the restaurant, just take the rest home as a take-away! Sometimes you have to order at a buffet in a restaurant and the food will be brought or you'll be called.



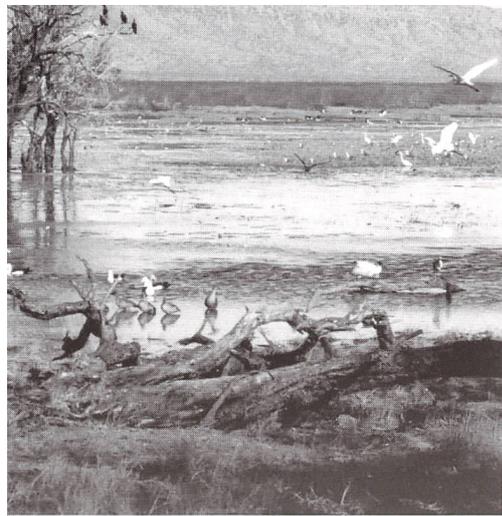
Sandboarding....eine rutschige Angelegenheit!



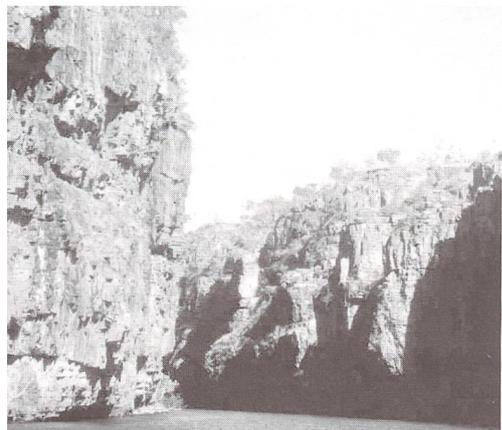
Wusste nicht, dass es Trams in Australien gibt...



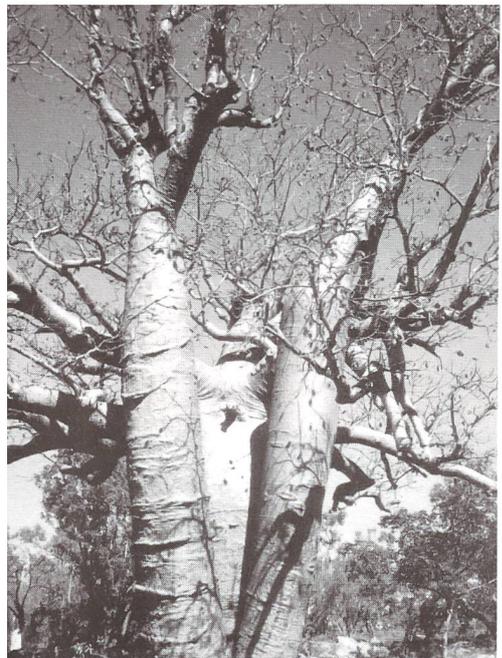
Die Pelikane haben offenbar Hunger



Nebst den Vögeln leben hier auch Krokodile...



Katherine Gorge, vom Schiff aus



Ein Baob-Baum, der nur in der Kimberley-Region heimisch ist.

Shopping...

Liquor shops (alcoholic drinks) are separated from the usual shops. You don't have to balance the vegies, the shop assistants do it and pack your shopping... customfriendly! ;-) You don't get two-in-one shampoos! Annoying! As the shops don't require a deposit for the trolleys, they're everywhere... upsetting! The Asian influence is visible in the shopping centres: Big shelves just for Asian food... better to make Asian friends who knows what the symbols mean! Prices are treacherous: they don't have one and two cent coins, but the prices are written like \$12.99 or \$9.97 and then rounded up or down. And paid by card they don't round...

The Telly...

I thought that commercials every 20min are too much. But hold on... here you have this every SEVEN minutes (except ABC, their intervals are longer) and a block takes 2-4 minutes!... *yawn*! No wonder why it's eleven when a movie has finished.

Despite many commercials on telly, there are some good spots like: "Violence against woman – Australia says no" or tobacco prevention. Thanks to a prohibition of smoking in many public places (train station, restaurants, some pubs), very few people smoke. There aren't any ads in medias. And you can reuse your clothes after an evening out in a pub, coz they don't smell that bad. Australians like series... the telly is full of them!! And programs which (should) help people doing something... gardening (remember the majority lives in houses with a backyard!) or cooking or American programmes (American Idol, Dr. Phil and stuff like that...) Because Australians worry (too?) much about their children, no violent movies or rude programs can be shown until 10pm.

Sport is an important part of Australian life and the rating is high. Especially at Olympics where Australia finished as the fourth best. They also had two channels (out of six) with 24hrs reporting on the events. Especially channel seven showed memorable events over and over again so everyone

had it by heart... Speaking of sport, don't confuse football and soccer. Football (footy) is Australian rugby and soccer is the word for our definition of football. (needed at least three months to find that out!). Speaking of telly, I've told you need one with teletext to have captions. If you have one, you can be sure to have one to one caption all the time during prime time (5:30-10:30pm). By law, 60% have to be subtitled during the day. Why no sign interpreters? Very simple: more people (deaf, hard of hearing, English learners, immigrants) benefit from captions than from interpreters.

The disabled

They are very welcome! Australians do everything to help them. (Had to be said) Just walk in a city and you'll see deepenings on the walkways, fewer stairs and you can hear a bell ringing telling you to cross the street when it's green... and so on. You also see and hear much more of disabled in the media and not necessarily described with pity. They're human and we have to treat them as humans.

The publicity is the reason why people know what a cochlear is and what it is for. Let me tell you a story:

Shortly after I started school, Perth's government wanted to cut down the money for the hearing screening. The big uproar caused the government to withdraw it. One day during that argument, you could see a big picture of a cochlear-implanted baby on the front page with the comment what'd have happened if it hadn't been screened... Consequently I could say: "I am deaf and I have a cochlear" and the people understood it. Because they knew not everyone benefits the same, depending on the age and the therapeutic approach. That was why my school wanted to find out what I can really hear and understand.

The best is yet to come: Obviously, people asked me whether I can sign. Naturally not. That's okay, they accepted it as a fact and do NOT insist I have to sign just because of my deafness!! They never expected me to be able to sign.