

Pests Down Under



Don't let a fear of the native wildlife stop you from moving to Oz, writes Karen Bleakley

Teaching your kids to be 'snake aware' is important

I run a Facebook group to help families move to Australia, and one subject that often comes up is the wildlife.

Well-meaning friends might share with you the post they've seen about the python curled up in the toilet bowl, or that spider as big as your head that somebody is trying (and failing) to catch in a pint glass.

I've been here over three years and I can safely say I've never had a snake in my toilet and I get far less spiders in my house here than I did when I lived in the UK. The main pests we get in our home are spiders, cockroaches and ants.

You aren't alone if you have a fear of spiders – I hate them too. We used to get big hairy spiders in our house in



Australia has dangerous snakes. But people seem to forget the UK has a venomous snake too. My husband was bitten by an adder at the beach in Hampshire when he was a child and he

spiders can string webs across walkways so make sure the area is clear before walking through.

There are all kinds of dangerous things in Australia. Snakes and spiders are only

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Hampshire. Since arriving, we've only had two spiders in our house and neither was dangerous.

Cockroaches can be a problem in older houses, and even newer houses can have their fair share of them. I was surprised when we moved into our modern rental just after we arrived and we woke up to find cockroaches roaming the bathrooms. Ants are annoying and they can appear in your home during the warmer months.

There is a simple solution that means you don't need to worry about pests in your homes: you get your house sprayed every year. A quick spray around the boundary points of your home, inside your loft and around the outside ensures your house stays pest-free.

almost died. Keep the danger in perspective; I haven't met anyone in Australia yet who has been bitten by a snake.

I take simple precautions. When I pick up clothes or towels I give them a shake, and I still check inside my shoes (on the very rare occasion that I'm not wearing sandals), just in case. I also always have a can of bug spray in the house for emergencies!

Being snake-and-spider aware and teaching your kids about the dangers is important. Don't leave tracks to walk through the long grass. Don't leave piles of garden clippings in your yard as snakes love dark, damp places, and be aware when walking near trees and bushes as

part of it: we have stingrays, blue ringed octopus, stonefish and sharks...

But a fear of wildlife shouldn't be a reason for not moving to Australia. Just remember, the UK has dangerous creatures too. There's the false widow spider which can cause a nasty bite. Then there's the weever fish with its sharp, venomous spines. Not to mention the Portuguese man o'war...

There is danger everywhere, if you look for it. You just need to educate yourself about the dangers and learn how to avoid them – just like you do in the UK. 🇦🇺

■ Karen Bleakley helps families take the stress out of moving to Australia at www.SmartStepstoAustralia.com.