

#11 Christmas gifting when you move to Australia

[00:00:00] Welcome to the New Life in Australia podcast hosted by me, Karen Bleakley, founder of smartstepstoaustralia.com. Moving to Australia with my family was a life changing experience, but it wasn't without its challenges. That's why I'm passionate about making the relocation and resettlement process easier for you, so you can enjoy this exciting adventure.

Join me and my special guests, as we share professional secrets and tips. Learn from people who've made the move, and discover businesses that can help you realize your dreams. Now is the best time to create the life you've always wanted. This podcast is here to show you what's possible, and to inspire you every step of the way.

Let's take a moment to acknowledge the Gubbi Gubbi people. The traditional owners and custodians of the land on which I live, work and play. I thank them for the privilege of being able to live in such an incredible part of the world and I pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. Hey there.

My name is Karen Bleakley. I'm your podcast host at the New Life in Australia podcast. And this [00:01:00] week we're going to be talking about a subject which I absolutely love, which is Christmas in Australia. Now I really do love Christmas. I love Christmas in Australia. I love Christmas in the sun. I love the beaches and the poolside and the barbecues and all of that fun stuff that comes from Christmas on this side of the world.

I know that some people find it a real challenge to get used to celebrating when it's so hot and sunny, but I've really embraced all of the different. Ways to celebrate Christmas over here. Now, this episode isn't going to be about the lifestyle of living in Australia and celebrating Christmas over here.

Instead, it's going to be about Christmas gifting when you move to Australia. I will be doing another episode later on about celebrating Christmas in the sunshine. So as I say, I absolutely love Christmas. I love Christmas movies. I love celebrating Christmas in July. We actually, my daughter and I start watching Christmas movies in May in preparation for Christmas in July.

I'll pop a post about Christmas in July in the show notes so you can read a little bit more about what that's all about. But [00:02:00] yeah, we watch Christmas

movies for most of the year round. I love any excuse to get festive and start thinking about Christmas. So I'm really going all in at the moment on finishing my Christmas shopping and getting Really excited about the long, lazy summer that we've got to look forward to here in Australia.

But when it comes to moving to Australia, there are some different things to navigate when it comes to Christmas gifts. So firstly, we're going to talk a bit about what things you might want to ask Santa for in your last Christmas in your home country, because I know that can be a bit tricky. And also we're going to talk about how to manage Christmas when you've moved to Australia and how to navigate gifting with family and sending cards and all of that kind of stuff.

Let's get started talking about your final Christmas in your home country. I know we really struggled with that because we had Christmas and then we didn't move to Australia until the September after that. So it was a while later, but we were still trying to think long term about Christmas gifting and what things we were asking for, what things would be practical to give to one another [00:03:00] and how we were going to be navigating moving all of our stuff to Australia.

It's really hard for your family to know. What things are going to work for your new life for you as well. And what's practical to give to you. So it's a sort of, we'll talk about that in this episode, about what things you might want to add to your Christmas list. It really helps people out because people have no idea what stuff you're going to be taking.

They might not know if you're taking a container or just traveling with a suitcase. And it can be really overwhelming for people trying to figure out, especially if you've got a big family, like we're a family of five and we've got kids. It can be really difficult. For people to know what to give you. Do they give you money?

Do they buy you things that you can use? Do they buy you things you can take with you? So it's a really good opportunity to just stop and have a think about what Christmas gifts are going to be practical for you. I know that in that last few months of our lives in the UK, we were having a massive declutter.

We were getting rid of so much at car boot sales. We were selling so much on Facebook Marketplace and Gumtree. So you don't really want to be given [00:04:00] gifts that you're going to have to find a new home for. It's a real

shame to have to. I know that we received some gifts in our final year that were fantastic gifts, but they just weren't going to work to take to Australia.

Like we received a big seesaw for the kids. It was great. It was something that probably would have lasted them another six months to a year after we'd moved to Australia, but it was really big and bulky and it was just gonna be really difficult to fit in our container. So unfortunately. We got a few months of using it and then had to find a new home for it.

And yeah, as I say, it's a real shame to have to do that. So if you're asking for gifts from family, if they're looking for what things might be practical for you to take, spend a bit of time thinking so that you're thinking ahead. What stuff is actually going to come with you to Australia? What stuff will help you in your new life?

What, what will last you for longer term? So there's loads of ideas that do work and I've got a blog post all about this. And this also gives you ideas for things that you can ask for, for your leaving party or for final birthdays as well, before you make the move. [00:05:00] So there's things like travel handbags and travel wallets.

They're really practical for getting around the airport. Beach towels, noise cancelling headphones, smart watches, Kindles, iPads, all of the kind of things that you can use on the journey to Australia and really make use of in your new life in Australia. Then there's things like cameras are a really good big product if you're looking for sort of a close family member buying you something.

A camera means that you can take some great pictures when you get over to Australia and you can make photo books and calendars for people back home. So that's a really lovely idea. Good quality luggage is really helpful because even though you're only making the move to Australia, one way, you're going to be making different trips around.

You're going to be traveling back to your home country again to visit family. So really good quality, solid luggage, lightweight luggage really good. Investment because luggage, we've bought cheap luggage before that just breaks after one journey. But when you really invest in really good quality luggage items, like I've got some [00:06:00] really amazing Osprey rucksacks that cost quite a lot of the time, but they've lasted us for 15 years and they're still going strong.

And we really, really appreciate having those in our garage ready to we go on our next long haul flights. So there's all kinds of sort of small, compact products

you can ask for from people, things that are really going to be practical for your new life in Australia, things that you can use on the journey and things that you're going to be able to use when you get here.

And there's also food and drink treats is a really good idea because they're things that you can enjoy before you make the move. Although it's worth remembering that if you're asking for these kind of things for your leaving party, make sure you've got enough time to enjoy them before you actually have to fly.

Because I know that when we had our leaving party a couple of weeks before we were making the move, we got loads of chocolate hampers and champagne and bottles of gin and wine and all that kind of stuff. And unfortunately in two weeks we just didn't have the time to eat and drink it all, so we still had to find new homes for some of that.

So yeah, think about how much [00:07:00] time you've got left. Between the event and between traveling as well, when you're thinking of what you're going to ask and put on your Santa's Christmas list.

you've also got the idea of money gifts. If people aren't really sure what to get you, you could always put money in a separate account and then use that to buy an annual pass for a theme park or a wildlife park. When you get to Australia, people love knowing that they're investing in helping you set up your new life in Australia.

So that's a really good idea.

So for our last Christmas in the UK, our kids got , so many toys that people bought them just for the sake of buying them a game or a toy.

And quite often they were broken really quickly and didn't last very long. And it's a real shame. I love really. Investing in quality, thoughtful gifts. But I know that Christmas can get to the stage where you're just kind of rushing around buying things for people for the sake of it. You end up with lots of duplicate gifts.

You end up with gifts that maybe aren't the best quality that don't necessarily last. And when you move to Australia, this is an opportunity to put a stop to all of that, to really think about what [00:08:00] stuff. It's going to be practical for you. I just hate things going in landfill and just being chucked away.

So just make it a really thoughtful Christmas.

Then you also need to be thinking about gifting in the future when you've actually made the move to Australia. And I think it's a really worthwhile opportunity to sit down with your family members and have a chat about how you're going to manage that and work out what your ideas are for how you're going to do it in the future.

It's much easier to do that in person when you can actually have a conversation about it, rather than kind of just falling into a system of just trying to post stuff from Australia to your family and friends back home and having them post stuff to you. Just spend some time thinking about it, especially for people like my parents, I know aren't necessarily the most internet savvy people out there.

So it really helps them to have an idea of what their options are for sending gifts to us now we're in Australia. Hosting things internationally, I'll just say this now, it's a big hassle and it's really expensive. Things take a really [00:09:00] long time. We've just received a letter from somebody in England and it took about a month to get here.

I know that it should not take that long, I think it should probably take about a week, but it actually took about a month to get here. And my twins just turned 14 and most of their cards have been posted from the UK still haven't arrived. I expect we'll get them nearer to Christmas time. I know that also from past experience when we've posted packages from Australia to England, sometimes they've taken weeks and weeks and weeks to arrive.

So posting in my opinion is a lot of hassle. It is really lovely to get a thoughtful gift and unbox it and it having things that have been posted by hand to you, but I would personally avoid it if you can. I prefer ordering online. So we made a decision before we made the move that we would generally not be buying Christmas and birthday gifts for one another, but we would send something for the kids in the family and they would send stuff for the kids in our family.

So that could either be money put [00:10:00] into someone's account so that they can buy stuff. Or we go online and order online because I know for us, it's really easy. We know all of the shops in the UK. We can just go online to any of the shops, just place an order with our Australian debit cards and have it sent to family members in the UK.

And then they can either wrap up the gift if they want to or whatever. It's just really easy. It's a little bit harder for family in the UK to know where they can

shop in Australia. But again, it's really easy. I know what my brother does every year is he just Googled what the shopping centers were near us and realized Westfield was the brand of the big shopping centers near us.

And now he just sends the kids a Westfield shopping voucher online that they can then add to their phones and just go shopping with. So I don't post things back to family in the UK, I literally order it online or we put money in family members bank accounts so that they can put it towards something big that they want to buy for the kids.

Also, the other thing that we do do every Christmas is order [00:11:00] calendars for family members and photo books for our parents every Christmas, they really look forward to receiving that. And what we do is we put photos from the last year, from all of the adventures that we've been on and put those in the calendars and photo books.

And then family members that don't see us very often can see how the kids are growing up. They can see the kind of opportunities the kids have got over here. And it's just a really lovely way of sharing our lifestyle with our family back home. So for that, I just go on to an online UK based photo book website, calendar based website.

There's so many of them out there. I use photo box boots and lots of different websites do them. So you can just go and Google photo books and order it. You just upload your images, drop them in into the templates and it's really quick and easy to do. And they're really appreciated. And also I don't post cards either because I just, life's too short.

So what I do instead is use an online card company like Moonpig or Card Factory or someone like that to go online [00:12:00] and send cards online. I do that for all my Christmas cards too. So it takes a little bit of time, but you can usually, depending on the platform you're using, create a template. I usually upload a photo of us.

Like with a Santa photograph that we get taken every year, even though the kids are older, I still am dragging them along to Santa photos. So we upload our Santa photo to the template and then you can just go in and adapt the text for every recipient. Once you've put all of your addresses in the address book on these online platforms, you don't need to do it again.

You just select them from a dropdown menu. So once you've got your first year of card ordering out of the way, it's a lot easier to do it in subsequent years.

Another really lovely idea for kids, especially, and for families, people who want to send things to you in Australia is you could send them gifting website links like Experience Oz, Adrenaline, Red Balloon, things like that.

People can either gift you an experience or a ticket to an attraction. [00:13:00] Or zoo passes or whatever it is, there's so many different ideas, or they can gift you a voucher that you can then use on those sites to actually redeem against those experiences yourself. You see, for me, Christmas is more about how it makes you feel.

I love giving and receiving experiences because to me, that's so much more important than just a plastic gift or a block of knives or something kind of practical that you could give to somebody. I love sending and receiving flowers or wine or hampers this time of year too. I think it's really lovely to open the door and have a bunch of flowers waiting there or a hamper or something like that because these are things that I know I don't buy for myself but I really love receiving and especially for flowers.

When I put a vase of flowers in the middle of my house, whenever I see that bunch of flowers, it reminds me of the person who sent it to me. So I think that's a really lovely idea. And there's some fantastic brands out there as well for flowers and hampers that focus on ethical and sustainable [00:14:00] practices.

So you can make sure that your gifting has an impact too, and it can make you feel good while you're gifting as well, because you're giving an extra experience through the gift that you're sending. So some of these companies even make donations to charities. So have a look online and see which ones kind of align with your values and which ones give to charities that you support.

So the gift of giving can make an even bigger impact well beyond the person who is being given the gift. So think about that and embrace that when it comes to giving for Christmas. I'll pop some of my relevant articles in the show notes for you to have a look at final tip that I've got for you around Christmas is if you're about to move and Christmas is only a few weeks or months away, get organized before you move and leave whatever it is you need for that Christmas with your family and friends before you make the move.

It just takes off a lot of pressure because when you're making the move. Life is quite hectic and there's so much to do to settle into your new life in Australia. You've got to set up [00:15:00] Medicare, driving licenses, find a rental, maybe schools for the kids. It's really full on and there's a lot to be thinking about.

The last thing you need to be thinking about is hosting or ordering. Birthday gifts or Christmas gifts for people back in your home country. So if you've got any birthdays or Christmas or anything like that coming up in the next few weeks or months after you've moved, I think it's really worthwhile just getting organized for that early.

I know that when we made the move I wrote out all of our Christmas cards early. So we moved in September. So I left all these Christmas cards with family members to give out. And I wrapped up Christmas presents for everybody that final year to just give out on that for Christmas so that I didn't even have to think about it a few weeks after we made the move to Australia.

It really does make it a lot easier. I know it's really busy when you're actually about to move and you've got a lot on your mind. But when you actually get over here again, you'll really appreciate having been organized and got that all sorted. So the earlier you can start organizing that, the better.

There's no deadlines on it. I [00:16:00] mean, if you know you're moving in September and you want to get all this organized, it doesn't hurt to start writing your Christmas cards out in May or July or whenever it is, just get them done so that they're all there, packed up, all ready to go. So Christmas in Australia is a really different experience, and I'll be doing a podcast all about that very soon.

I just wanted to get in early to talk about gifting because I know that people are starting to think about Christmas. I was Christmas shopping actually yesterday, so I know all the shops are full of all the Christmas stuff and all of the carols are going on in the, in the shops. So now it's the perfect time to be thinking about what you're going to be ordering for people, what you're going to be doing and how you're going to be celebrating.

So just to recap, think carefully about what you might want to receive on your final Christmas in your home country, but make sure you tell people that's the key. Because if people don't know what it is that you want to receive or what would be practical or what would be impractical, then they're just going to go ahead and buy you what they would have done anyway.

So make sure you tell people so that you're getting stuff that will be worth you receiving that you will be able to take with you to your new life in [00:17:00] Australia, or that you'll be able to use before you go so that you're getting the use out of it. And then the people can appreciate giving you that gift.

And secondly, make plans for your future Christmases when you've moved to Australia and make sure that everyone's on the same page. You might make different decisions with different family members. So you might find one pocket of family still want to do gifts and another family member. Wants to stop gifts, whatever it is, just work out.

And so that you know exactly what you're going to be doing in the future so that you don't have to figure it out when you get here, if this episode has got you thinking all about Christmas and it's got you in that festive spirit, I would love it if you'd leave a positive review or share the podcast with the people that you love to get them thinking about Christmas when you've made the move to Australia, that's it from this week.

Looking forward to catching up again next week and let's get started building your new life in Australia. One episode at a time.