

Planning a trip

Welcome to The New Life in Australia podcast, hosted by me, Karen Bleakley, founder of Smart Steps to australia.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. It's 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 go

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.

Hi there. Welcome to the New Life in Australia podcast. I'm Karen, and today I'm going to be talking all about planning an Australian holiday so that you can explore Australia.

I've done lots of road trips in Australia. I really love traveling around this beautiful country. It really is an incredible country with so many varied landscapes and so many exciting experiences to be had.

Before we moved here, my husband and I drove from Sydney on the East coast all the way up to Port Douglas. We've driven the West coast from Broome down the southwest. We've done lots of shorter trips, closer to Brisbane with the kids as well since we moved here. And I absolutely love taking a road trip to explore, and I think it's the perfect way to get out and really enjoy your new home.

I'm recording this because I'm a few days out of starting off on a road trip up to from Brisbane to Early Beach. I'm really, really excited about it 'cause it's the biggest road trip we've done with the kids since we moved to Australia. They're getting a little bit older now and a bit more tolerant about sitting in the car [00:01:00] for longer.

So I'm really, really excited about getting there and taking them and showing them some of these amazing sites that we've seen before in the past when my husband and I traveled without the kids.

So there's a lot to think about when it comes to planning your Australian holidays. So let's dive straight in.

Now, assuming that you've already made the decision about where it is you want to go. So the first point is to decide on your transport. Think about how you plan on traveling. Are you traveling long distance? Are you gonna be flying to the starting point of your trip or are you gonna be driving there?

Are you gonna be hiring a car to get there? If you fly there, do you need to hire a car when you land or are you gonna be able to explore on public transport and via different trips and tours? So thinking about your transport to get to the location and how you're gonna then go on and explore the location when you get there, and how, whether you are gonna be based in a location or whether it's part of a longer trip where you need to be driving to a different place.

So if it's not [00:02:00] that far, you might consider driving it, or you might consider hiring a bigger car, or you might want to hire a motor home or a camper van. You might find that you need a four-wheel drive to go off road on some of the, the trip that you're looking at taking. So again, have you got a four-wheel drive or do you need to hire one of those when you get there?

So spend some time really considering the best transport to get to your location and to get around your location. It all really depends on the type of trip that you are doing and where you are heading..

So decide on transport . So we are using our own car to drive up to Ellie Beach. It's quite a few hours drive but we just kind of felt like it was the best option. We did consider traveling in a motor home, but we actually decided that rather than hiring a bigger motor home to stay in, we're just gonna stay in various different locations and caravan parks and things on the way.

So think about how you want to travel, how you want to experience the traveling and flying to the destination definitely does help cut out some of that [00:03:00] travel time. So if you're short on time, just flying from A to B really helps. But then you probably need to hire a car when you get to that location.

That feeds in nicely to planning your accommodation. So think about where it is that you're gonna be going, especially if it's school holiday times. Think about

how far in advance you need to book that accommodation. If it's some specific place that you really wanna stay, then you're gonna want to book that up fairly early because you don't want to lose out.

If it's school holidays, you're gonna need to get things booked earlier. If you're more flexible and you don't really mind where you are staying in that kind of area, then you can leave it a bit later. But a really good way of doing it is to book. Via a way like booking.com, where you can choose accommodation options that allow you to cancel at the last minute, if anything changes, or you can change your plans.

So we started booking our road trip back in sort of August, September, time to go at the end of November, early December. So a few months out we started booking it all, but I definitely made sure that I was able to cancel [00:04:00] or rearrange the dates if I needed to. There was some places along the way that were integral to the trip that were really important to me that I really wanted to do, so I made sure that I got those locked in first and fitted other things in around it.

Think about your budget when it comes to accommodation as well. Most places I've been booking have been around \$180 to \$200 a night for five of us, so it's not too expensive. Accommodation here, if you get organized and you book ahead. Some places we've splurged on, so we've kind of gone for some that are 250 to \$400 a night just for the odd night here and there.

But think about what it is that you want from your accommodation. Are you looking at just going to one location and just staying there, or are you like us doing a road trip where you need to kind of plan multiple stops along the way?

As part of this, be thinking about the bucket list experiences that you want to do, because some of those are gonna have relevance to booking your accommodation as well. Now, some bucket list experiences get. Really, really early. So you need to be [00:05:00] really on the ball if there's things that you really want to do.

So for instance, we are stopping to see the turtles laying their eggs at Bundaberg on the way up the coast, and that sells out really quickly every year. So we booked that in right at the beginning, before we'd booked in any accommodation. That was one of the first things that we booked in because we knew we really wanted to do it. We'd also like to do things like go to the Bundaberg Drinks factory to have a bit of a tour. So I'll probably look at booking that a few days ahead of the trip. It's not as important to us, but it's also

not as likely to sell out as things like the turtles laying their eggs, which really does book out really early.

We've got things that I've locked in quite recently, which is like the Witt Sunday Island cruises that we're doing because there's five of us traveling, that's gonna be something that we needed to get locked in fairly early as well. Well, there'll be limited days. We're available for a clear, full day to do it.

So I've got that organized and locked in. But again, if you planning your activities, be thinking about [00:06:00] what the cancellation options are. If I book them through a company like Get Your Guide, then that came with the ability to book now, pay later, and also to cancel the day if anything changed, like closer to the day. So it gives you a lot more flexibility if you can I think actually that is a much better way to go because especially if you're booking a few weeks ahead, you don't exactly know what things are gonna look like when you get there.

What if, when you are around the area it is. Torrential rain and really stormy, but the trip's gonna go ahead. But you thinking, is it worth going on the trip? You've still got the without.

You also need to be planning in your bucket list kind of travel experiences, the really important things you want to do alongside planning your accommodation. Because as an example, we're heading on a day trip to Great Keppel Island. Now it means going early morning, it means arriving late in the afternoon, so we need to be in that area.

To stay two nights to [00:07:00] go on that day trip. So be thinking about what day trips you want to do, especially if they're full big day trips that you're gonna be going out. You want to be waking up in that area ready to just go on the trip. You don't wanna be driving to the trip at sort of seven or 8:00 AM in the morning.

And equally when you get home, at the end of the day, after a long trip, you are tired and you just wanna get back to your resort and chill out by the pool, or go out and have dinner and go to bed. So for big trips, I always like to be there the night before and the night after at the very minimum. And it's also quite nice to have an extra night as well, because if you're out on a day trip all day, you are not able to explore the local area because you're gonna be out and about.

So the extra night just gives you that opportunity to check out the local area too.

So talking about driving tips. Now think about the drive times, plan out how long realistically you want to spend in the car between destinations and try to break up journeys. My kids hate long car journeys. They get really travel sick as well. So we're tr just trying to keep the. [00:08:00] Car journey's more manageable.

We're kind of planning breaks to stop for lunch or to have a little walk on the beach somewhere before we carry on, but we don't really want to be in the car for more than probably four or five hours in a day if we can help it. I think we have got one stretch of the day when we might be doing like a seven hour trip, and we'll try and do some in the morning.

Stop late morning for lunch break. Have a bit of a break and get back in the car again for the afternoon.

Think about how you travel best. You might decide to get up really early in the early hours of the morning and get a lot of your travel done early so that you arrive mid-morning and you are already there to have a beach day and enjoy the new destination, but do whatever works best for you. But really, really important is to plan in rest stops because driving in Australia you can drive a really long way and sometimes, depending on which

Sort of part of Australia, you are exploring roads can be really long and really straight and really boring and really exhausting. I know when we drove in Western Australia, [00:09:00] you were just driving straight for so many hours and you would barely see another car. There would be nothing at the side of the road.

You'd literally, literally be driving through nowhere to make sure you are planning in plenty of rest stops..

Be aware that driving at night in Australia comes with dangers too. There's kangaroos out on the roads, there's wildlife, there's koalas. There's emus, all different animals depending on where you are based in Australia. I know I was out in the car late last night and a possum ran out across the road in front of us, so it just adds a bit more danger.

So you just need to take more care when driving at night.

Another really important thing is to take food and drink with you when you are driving long distances, especially if you're driving somewhere out of the way.

It's not so important when you are driving along a really built up coastline, but when you are driving somewhere more rural, you wanna make sure that if your car broke down, that you've got plenty of food and water to keep you going, and that you've let people know. Where you are heading, what route you are taking, [00:10:00] and when to expect you to get there.

And make sure that you, if it's like a family member in the, in your home country that you need to stay in contact with, you can text them when you arrive safely just so that they know and give them some contact number so that if you didn't text them, they've got some way of reporting that you haven't shown up.

So maybe you give them the number of the resort that you're about to arrive at or whatever it might be. But make sure you stay in touch with them so that they know that if you don't check in that there is some problem.

And when you are traveling somewhere more remote, just be really aware of what fuel you've got in your tank, where the next petrol station is to fill up and make sure that you do fill up at those petrol stations. Because again, I know when we were traveling in Western Australia, you fill up once you drive for many hours before you see the next petrol station, and you really don't wanna run out of petrol somewhere.

On the side of the, really far away from anywhere. So just be really cautious with all of it. [00:11:00] Just make sure you've plenty of, if you, you can carry a separate can of as well. You know you're gonna run out anywhere.

. So the next one is travel insurance. I really highly advise you to consider taking out travel insurance because I know it's normal to take out travel insurance when you travel internationally, 'cause it covers you for hospital cover and all kinds of things in, in countries abroad.

Or if you lose your belongings or you, you have your wallet stolen or wherever it might be, that will cover you on the, on the international travel insurance, even for domestic travel insurance when you live in Australia. There's a lot of value to taking out domestic travel insurance Cover trips can easily cost you thousands and thousands of dollars..

What happens if you get sick and you can't take the trip? What happens if you've booked a really expensive day and you get covid and you can't go on it and you've passed the deadline for making a free cancellation? What if you are driving to your [00:12:00] resort and there's a bush fire and the road is closed and you have to find somewhere else to stay?

There's so many different things that can happen.

I think it's really worth having travel insurance and I think it's really worth spending a bit of time fully understanding what that travel insurance will cover you for. So it's worth taking out travel insurance and making sure that the insurance that you choose covers you for the things that are important to you. For instance, for our upcoming trip, I made sure that we had covid cover on our travel insurance because there's quite a lot of covid around Queensland at the moment, and I didn't want to have to cancel a really important trip.

Or part of the tour or something that we were doing because one of the kids got covid or I got covid or, or whatever. So I think it's still really important to check if that is covered. But also natural disasters was something that I felt was really important. Again, you've got bush fires, you've got floods, things like that they can all get in the way of your trip.

[00:13:00] So I paid a little bit extra to make sure that I've got natural disaster cover on my travel insurance. Yes, it's an extra fee on top of your holiday, but for that peace of mind that it gives you, I personally think it's really worth it.

Now the next one is something that people always say said to us when we were backpacking. Don't overcommit yourself. There is so much to see and do in Australia, and if you are anything like me. You wanna do all of it? , I wanna do all of it right now 'cause I just love traveling and I love Australia and I want to see all of it and go to all these places.

But if you've moved here permanently, now this is your home and you've got plenty of time to do another trip, another time. So don't try and do everything in the one trip. And I do have to reign myself back in with this because I want to do all the things. But it's just reminding myself that we're gonna do a manageable amount without overdoing it.

For instance, on this trip, we're visiting the Whitt Sundays and we're going to great capital island. And [00:14:00] I had to stop myself from also booking in Hamilton Island and, and all different islands along the way they can work for a different holiday in the future.

I don't wanna go places and have to rush and rush and see it. And I also know that by booking too many day trips in, we'll all be exhausted. And actually there'll be days when the kids just want to enjoy the waterpark at the resort that we're staying at and not actually leave the house. And I just want to lay by the pool for a bit and just chill out.

So building in those chill out days really, really valuable.

We also, as part of this, not Overcommitting ourselves, chose a lot of resorts and campsites that have these waterparks and jumping pillows, because that really takes a lot of pressure off us. Now our kids are a little bit older. They can kind of just go off on their own and, and do these things without us kind of following them round like we had to when they were tiny.

So it's gonna give myself, for my husband, a lot more freedom during the holiday because they're gonna be able to kind of go off and have fun in the playgrounds and do their own thing a little bit. Within the safety of the resort, so we all get to chill out, so it'll be [00:15:00] perfect.

Another tip is if you have a pet, get a pet sitter organized early. Think about the kind of pet sitter that you want, how you want your pet to be looked after. Don't leave it till the last minute because places do get booked out. So you've got the option of house sitters where somebody comes to stay in your home to look after your pets.

You've got the option of kennels where you book your pet into like a big resort. Kind of kennel suites. You could get people coming into your home to feed your dog or cats who just come in, walk, walk them, leave them there on their own. You have people who take your pets in their own home, so there's loads of different options, but whatever it is that you are looking at, make sure you get something locked in early, especially during the school holidays because places do get booked up really quickly.

One of the main tips that I give people who are new to Australia when it comes to traveling is to keep in touch with local conditions, especially as we're going to be traveling during summertime, which is when our storm season is. It's really important to keep up with weather alerts [00:16:00] and any anything that's going on in the local area.

So whether that is bush fires or any bad storms that are due. So you can follow local council pages, you can follow local weather pages, but just stay on top of that information so that you are aware of any extreme conditions that you need to be aware of and that you can change your plans if you need to.

And the final one is enjoy it. You live here now. Remember that you can do this again and again and again. You don't have to cram everything into this first trip. And I know, as I said earlier, I feel really stressed because I want to do all of the

trips right now. I would love nothing more than just. Just hop in a caravan now or a motor home and go right round and do the big lap.

That's really something I would love to do, but we're just waiting for the kids to finish school before we go ahead and do that. Now that they're a bit older, we're gonna let them finish their school before we do any really big traveling. There is rush to do it all. When you live here permanently, it's always gonna be there.

You can go later. You [00:17:00] can trips every year. You can do day trips, you can go weekends away and start ticking off some of these travel experiences.

So Australia really is a fantastic country to explore. There are amazing landscapes. There's some beautiful nature and wildlife experiences to have. There's all these epic tours and trips that you can go on.

There's days out, there's just so much to see and do. So you don't need to spend a lot of money on travel. You can go camping if you love camping. You can stay at holiday parks, you can try glamping.

There's lots of places where they have ready built tents that you can stay in. Some of them really expensive, some of them not so much. So you can make the choice and there's even lots of day trips that you can do.

When you get out there and explore, it really just reminds you why you moved. So, especially if you've been feeling a bit homesick, there's nothing more exhilarating and exciting than just kind of pulling into a really beautiful new beach and just remembering that you actually get to live [00:18:00] here. I. And whenever I kind of think to myself, I'm so lucky to live here, it's so beautiful.

I kind of remind myself I'm not lucky. I just took action and did the hard thing, and this is the reward that we get.

So exploring really does keep me excited about living here in Australia, and I don't ever think I'll get bored of looking out across the ocean and seeing these beautiful views.

I think the most important thing for me with this move has also been that I don't feel that I need an international holiday every year now to enjoy the sunshine. I'm really happy, even if I'm just heading an hour up the coast from Brisbane or down the coast. I just love it here because it all feels so tropical and the landscape's so stunning.

So I don't feel the need to spend a fortune on a big international holiday anymore. But the best bit for me is that I don't feel sad when I get to the end of a holiday and I have to come home because I love where I live. When I lived in the UK and [00:19:00] we'd go abroad somewhere like Spain, we'd come home and feel a real downer that we had to go back to our old life again, and that nothing was different. We'd had this beautiful time away. We'd loved it, but we were just back to reality again. Whereas I don't get that feeling anymore that we come back to our lives in Brisbane because I love it here. I know that people say when you live somewhere, it's not the same as being on holiday, and it isn't like there are sort of different problems that you have when you live somewhere that you don't have when you're on holiday. But it still has a bit of a holiday vibe for me where I live and I get excited about coming home, and I really love that.

That's something that I always wanted was a home that I didn't want to escape from. And I feel like I found that here.

So I hope this episode has inspired you to plan your future holidays in Australia. There really is so much to see and do here, and I hope you like the idea of all of these amazing experiences that you're gonna be able to have when you start traveling around this beautiful country. So [00:20:00] that's it from me this week.

Let's get building Your New Life in Australia, one episode at a time.