

Episode 14 - Christmas in Australia

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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.

Hey there. Welcome to the New Life in Australia podcast. I'm Karen, and today I'm gonna be talking all about a subject that I really love, which is Christmas in Australia. Now, I've already done a podcast recently, which was about Christmas gifting when you move to Australia to plan how to gift a presence abroad internationally, and what things might be useful for you to ask for on your Christmas list in your last year in your home country before you move.

So I'll pop a link to that in the show notes as well. But this episode is more about actually celebrating Christmas and how different it is and ways to embrace those differences.

In my opinion, the most important thing is not to compare it to Christmas that you're used to. So you've always had Christmas back home with friends, family celebrate in a certain way, doing the same old traditions, and when you move here. Everything changes. It's so different. I know moving from a really cold wintery Christmas to a really hot, sunny Christmas was a bit of a learning curve for us.

It is a bit weird. takes a bit of getting used [00:01:00] to, but it is a whole new adventure and you just need to create a new way of celebrating this new festive season.

It is just the most perfect time to start some new Christmas traditions for yourself, your traditions back home from your home country. They probably likely come from family traditions. You do things in the way that everyone else in the family's always done them, and you're kind of following that, that process.

But when you actually get here. You free to create your own brand new traditions and things your way and celebrate Christmas your way. So really empowering and really, and I've loved embracing idea of ions. We've.

So today we're gonna be talking about some of my favorite traditions that, that I've implemented since we moved to Australia, just to give you some ideas and to kind of just start talking about how we celebrate Christmas over here.

So firstly we get annual santa photos taken. Now I know that's not different. Like in the UK you could get Santa photos taken. We used to go to different places to [00:02:00] get them done before we made the move over here. But here we actually found an amazing photographer who does this really beautiful set and every year we go back to this same place to have Santa taken.

And although my kids are getting older and older. We're gonna be going back to this place even when they're really grown up and probably when they've got their, their kids as well later on down the line because we just love it and it's a really important part of ours. We just all get together, we all get dressed up, we go and we meet.

We have these beautiful photos taken.

These photos are perfect then, because I can put them on Christmas cards to send back to family and friends in the uk, so I just get those organized online. . So I just upload the, the digital photographs online into one of the card companies, like Moon Pig or whatever.

And I just have those Christmas cards sent then to family back home. And they love it. They love seeing the, how the kids are growing each year and how they're changing. There's so many different options for Santa photos in all kinds of places. You've got shopping centers, [00:03:00] you can even get pet Christmas photos at places like Pet Barn and things like that.

You can also get Santa at the beach photos, which are really good fun, where Santa's wearing board shorts and thongs. There are a lot of fun. So yeah, embrace it, go along with it. Do whatever it is that you wanna do. But for me, I love getting our santa photos taken every year, and it's something that we'll be continuing to do for many years to come..

Christmas Carol Events are something that we really love to go along to every year in Australia, I'm not sure we ever really went to many in the uk, but here in Australia where we live, it is a really common thing. The councils run lots and lots of different Carol events for every single suburb. They're really big events.

They have like lots of food trucks. They put up a big stage. They have singing, they have entertainment. The weather is usually pretty perfect. You take along some folding chairs a picnic or as I say, you buy food from the food trucks and you just sit into the evening listening to the beautiful music and it's just so lovely.

It's so different because obviously you're not wrapped up. You are [00:04:00] laying there on your picnic rug, wearing T-shirt and shorts and nausea appellant usually because there's plenty of mosquitoes around in the evenings as well. But it's a lot of fun. It's really good entertainment, and they usually end with a big firework display, so it's a really, really lovely family event.

So another thing to get used to is the difference of having the long summer holidays during our summertime in Australia. So when it's the Christmas season, your kids, if you've got kids, are on their long school summer holidays. My kids actually break up at the end of November. I know lots of kids break up through mid-December towards late December, and the holidays are usually sort of six to eight weeks long depending on the school that you go to.

So it's a really lovely being able to be off school, not having to do school runs when it's a beautiful hot weather and you can just really enjoy Christmas time without having that. School run, hanging over you and knowing that it's only a short sort of time before you've gotta get back to school [00:05:00] because when Christmas is over you've still got quite a few more weeks left of school holidays.

So it's, I really love the long school holidays for summertime and the weather is at its hottest. It's really beautiful weather. We do have storm season here in Queensland over the summer, but. It doesn't really disrupt your summer holidays too much. I know the summer holidays in England, we used to get

loads of rain and it wasn't always that hot and sunny through the whole summer holidays.

Whereas here you're pretty guaranteed really good weather. So we spend most of the days in the pool and just cooking barbecues and chilling out and going to the beach and all of that kind of stuff. So I really enjoy that aspect of Christmas.

One of the funniest, strangest things about Christmas in Australia is seeing Santa in board shorts and thongs. So thongs as in flip flops. So walking around like the sort of beaches and things. You'll see people dressed up as Santa's dressed for summer, so maybe in like a summer Hawaiian shirt, that kind of thing, rather than in the [00:06:00] really big, thick kind of red suit that you do with boots because.

And it's really funny. So yeah, there's lots of Christmas cards that have got Santa dressed for the beach. Sitting back on a deck chair maybe with a beer in his hand. You get like big inflatable Santas and things like that. And, and there's, it's just really funny seeing Santa dress so differently over here.

I know that we have people dress up as Santa and drive around in an open top car and they kind of pull in around the suburbs and give out sweets to the kids. We also, when we used to go to nippers at the surf club, when our kids were little, we. We used to go there and at Christmas time, they would have Santa again wearing board shorts and his kind of surf gear, and he would be on a quad bike driving along the beach, kind of throwing candy canes behind him.

So Santa is just really fun and really hilarious over here.

When it comes to food traditions for Christmas in Australia, things are quite different, but you can choose, as I say, this is your Christmas. You are reinventing how you're gonna celebrate Christmas, [00:07:00] so you can make the decision about what you want to do for your Christmas lunch or your Christmas dinner, or whether you wanna celebrate it at the beach, or whether you wanna go to a park, celebrate, or whether you want to cook a barbecue or whatever it is you wanna do.

Now a lot of people who move here decide to stop cooking like a big full roast Turkey because it is really hot here. But if you really love Turkey, which I really love a Christmas Turkey, and kind of doing that whole roast dinner I still do do it, but I tend to do it on a different day other than Christmas day..

So if you do want to cook a Turkey or a Turkey crown or something over here, you can still do that. They're definitely a lot harder to get hold of. I tend to try and get hold of one early if I can, and put it in the freezer because it's not like every household has a Turkey here for Christmas. Loads of people will.

Prioritize kind of having a barbecue or having a big buffet with cold meats and salads, maybe some hot vegetables, things like that. So people don't all have Turkey. So if Turkey is important to you for Christmas, I would get one organized early or be looking [00:08:00] out in the shops to pick one up.

And as I say, it is hot, so lots of people don't cook the full rose Turkey, but just pop on the air conditioning and you'll be fine if it's something that you feel really passionate about wanting to do. I love the idea of just having Turkey dinner and then having like leftovers for a few days after it.

So it's, we do it every year, but then on the actual day of Christmas day. I tend to do a barbecue just 'cause we're in and out the pool all day and it's way more chilled out and takes a lot less time because, let's be honest, in England. Hours and hours cooking for a big Christmas dinner. If I was hosting the family over, you would be in the kitchen for most of the day and it would be really time consuming.

So you're not actually able to enjoy that time of Christmas day with your family and friends because you spend half of it in the kitchen. So it's really nice if you can just kind of. Pre-buy lots of different foods, prep lots of salads ahead of time, or whatever it is you wanna do, get it in the fridge, get it ready, and then it's just , so much easier then on Christmas day to just get [00:09:00] all of that stuff out and just to enjoy it in a really laid back kind of relaxed way.

As for puddings at Christmas time, you can still go Christmas pudding here and do whatever it is that you want. Pavlova is a really popular Christmas dessert, really like that. It's known as Pav in Australia says, do you want some pav? They mean Pavlova. Really delicious. It's much lighter and. And cooler to eat that rather than a hot, stodgy Christmas pudding, soaked in custard.

But go with whatever it is you want. If you wanna kind of bring your traditions from your home country with you, then go for it. If you want to create new traditions, then go for that too.

I know that when we lived in the uk, Christmas was really kind of about celebrating in a way that was expected of us. So we had to do certain things. We had to see different family members in different parts of the country. We had to

go along to certain family events that were running, and it felt very structured and Christmas.

Wasn't as relaxed as it could be because we had to be in different places all the time doing [00:10:00] different things because that was kind of the way that it was. Whereas over here, because we don't have family over here in Brisbane, it's so much more laid back. We can decide how we want to celebrate. We can decide whether to go to the beach or the park, or whether to stay in our own backyard and use the pool.

We can decide whether we want to host a party or whether we want to be social, or whether we just wanna stay home with our own little family and enjoy the peace and quiet without any expectation of having to go to any particular social engagements. So I really do appreciate being able to have a laid back, quiet Christmas time..

So actually you get to choose how much you want to do or how much you want to participate or not participate. In Christmas, there's loads of parties going on all around. There's, especially because so many people have moved to Australia, like so many of our neighbors aren't originally from Australia and people have parties everywhere and people are all trying to stay connected and have fun because it is a really lovely social time of the year if you want it to be.[00:11:00]

Entirely up to you how you wanna celebrate.

As for the dress code during Christmas in Australia, it is so much more laid back. So in the UK I used to get up in the morning. On Christmas day, I would put on some kind of more formal clothes. I'd put on makeup, I'd do my hair. I'd want to look really nice. It would just be a really sort of more of AP time of year.

Whereas here, get up, put on swimwear, put on sandals, put on a wrap. Don't bother with makeup. It's so much more laid back and there's no pressure to look a certain way or dress a certain way. I just love it just being able to be in swimwear all the time. We jump in the pool, we get out the pool, we jump back in the pool again, and it's just all about just being really relaxed.

So I really like having that dress code for Christmas over here.

So overall Christmas is really different in Australia. It is weird getting used to hot sunny weather when it's Christmas time. It does take your brain time to get

used to it, and I do still find moments when I'm like, this is just strange.
[00:12:00] But it's a good strange and it because it's so different. And you're just treating it in a completely different way and you are reinventing it for yourself.

It's really exciting. So make sure that you embrace the differences and stop comparing. Make sure you can do it your own way and just reimagine how you want Christmas to be. And don't forget, there is always Christmas in July to celebrate. So in July when it's cooler in Australia, it's the perfect time to celebrate Christmas all over again and have a roast Turkey hot sort of roast dinner because it's much cooler and you can snuggle up and draw a blanket and watch some Christmas movies.

I love Christmas in July and it means we get to have two Christmas in Australia. So I'll pop link in show notes about

I've got a few blog posts about Christmas traditions and Christmas gifting and all things like that, so I'll pop those in the show notes for you to read too. Thanks for listening, and I hope you enjoyed listening to me talk all about Christmas traditions in Australia and why I love it so much. And just to give you some [00:13:00] inspiration that yes, it will be different, but that doesn't mean that you'll be sad and that it'll be difficult.

You can just make it your own way, celebrate how you want, and just make it a really different experience. And you can still link up with all the people that you love via FaceTime, via Zoom and things like that, because. Togethers on Zoom with all my family and I really love it so it is really possible to love Christmas in Australia when you just embrace it for being a different experience altogether to the one that you've been used to.

Thanks for listening. Now, I'm going to take a break now for my Christmas holidays. I'm just about to get ready to go on a lovely road trip with the family, but I'll be back in a few weeks with more episodes. In the meantime, let's get building Your New Life in Australia one episode at a time.