

Whale watching

Karen: [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 some people who've made the move, and discover businesses that can help you realise 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, I'm Karen.

Welcome to this week's [00:01:00] episode of the New Life in Australia podcast. Today I'm going to be talking about one of my favorite things to do in Australia. I'm really loving the opportunity to use this podcast to share some of my favorite experiences in Australia, share some travel inspiration for you, and just share some ideas of experiences that you can have when you get over here.

Now one of the best things that I like to try and do every single year if I get a chance is to go whale watching. I'm just recording this a couple of weeks before I go on this year's whale watching trip. This year I'm going with Brisbane Whale Watching from Redcliffe in Moreton Bay in Queensland. And I've been on one of their trips before.

I've been on lots of different ones. Different whale watching trips over the years, since I've been here from different islands and different locations, all in Queensland. There are lots of opportunities to go on whale watching cruises in all different parts of Australia. It's not only in Queensland, but I feel really lucky to live in Queensland here, where we can just get out on the water and see some amazing experiences when [00:02:00] it comes to whale watching.

So Australia has so many amazing opportunities for whale watching, whether you prefer to watch them from the shoreline, if you maybe get a bit seasick and

would prefer to keep your feet on dry land, or if you are ready to go out on a whale watching cruise. But this episode is going to be all about going on a whale watching cruise and just sharing some of the tips that I've learned from the, I don't know, maybe seven or eight different cruises that I've been on since I've lived in Australia.

So first up, I just wanted to answer some questions about whale watching crews, because I know if you haven't been on one before, it can be really difficult to figure out whether it's right for you to go on one or not, and whether you should be taking your kids with you and whether you should be planning seasick tablets and all that kind of stuff.

So let's get started with the big question. Will I get seasick? That's a really hard one to answer. Do you normally get seasick? Have you been seasick on other boat trips? Now, I've never been seasick before Touchwood. I'm really [00:03:00] lucky. I have really good sea legs. I can be on really choppy waters and I've never been seasick.

I've been on cruises. I've been on tiny boats. I've been on long tails in Thailand, kind of out in the ocean and Never suffered with seasickness. However, my husband, Matt is really seasick. He gets really seasick when he goes on boats out in the open ocean that stays still. So he's okay if he's going on a, say a speed boat in a direction where he's heading somewhere.

But if he goes somewhere like on a whale watching cruise where the boat becomes stationary for a while as you're watching the whales, that's when he turns very green and gets very, very sick. Poor thing. He really, really, really gets sick. Horrible to see and it's horrible for him to experience. My kids get travel sick.

And in different varying levels across the three of them, so one of them gets really travel sick, one of them gets a bit travel sick, [00:04:00] and the other one a bit less. Really, I think if somebody gets travel sick, there's a really good chance they'll get seasick too. So if you are in any doubt, the important thing to do is to take some seasick preventative medication.

So you can get from the pharmacy, from the chemist, you can get different tablets to take that are suitable for kids as well. So go into the chemist and just ask over the counter what the best remedy is. Make sure you take it early enough. Some of them might say take the night before, some might say take the night before and the morning of.

Make sure you're reading the instructions and taking them in enough time because they need time to work. The other thing I would say absolutely is to wear the travel wristbands that you can get, the Seasick travel wristbands. When I was pregnant with my twins, I suffered awful pregnancy sickness. And although the travel wristbands didn't stop it, I felt a whole lot worse on the days when I [00:05:00] didn't wear them.

So just, if you're prone to feeling sick, wear the wristbands. They really, really do help. I know they help my kids when they go on plane travel as well because they get airsick. So on boats, I think it's just a no brainer. We take packs of them with us wherever we go on boat trips and we get them out for all of the kids to wear.

But it's even worth it for adults to wear them too, because if you feel like you're going to get seasick, then they really do help. Unfortunately, my husband just gets it's way too seasick and he's just accepted after attempting one whale watching trip once, he will never do it ever again. He just got too sick doing it and for somebody that gets that sick then it's not worth being trapped out in the ocean for the afternoon, or for the morning, or half a day.

It's too much. So now my husband has resigned himself to the fact that he will stick to shore based whale watching. So there are lots of places that you can see whales [00:06:00] from the beach, from the shore. I've seen them when we've just been laying on the beach at Noosa. I've seen them at Rainbow Beach and all different places.

So there's lots of opportunities for you to whale watch from the shore if going out on a boat isn't for you. But it's still worth, if you are going out on a boat, just being prepared for that. If you've never really been on a boat trip before or if you're taking kids with you and they've never been on a boat trip before, again, just, it always pays to be cautious and just take the seasick tablets.

It won't hurt you. You'll be much better off taking them and not needing them than not taking them and then finding out later that you are getting seasick. Another question worth answering is, can you swim with whales? Well that's certainly an opportunity on offer with some of the tours available in Australia.

There are a few tours that allow you to get in the water with the whales in a small group, so have a look at that if that's something that you're keen on exploring. It's not something that I've done personally, I know that with whale watching being in the off season, [00:07:00] I find it a little bit cold and the idea of getting in the water in Queensland in winter.

I know it's not that cold compared to say, what it would be like in England in winter. But when you're kind of standing, watching the whales getting a bit shivery, The idea of jumping in the ocean with them doesn't usually appeal to me, but I'm usually really happy just watching them from the boat and staying dry.

But it is an opportunity. It does look like an amazing experience. And I have seen groups go in the water with the whales before. It would certainly be a bucket list opportunity to do. One more question that I get asked is, is a whale watching cruise a good idea? A good thing to take your kids to, is it a family friendly activity?

And it is a great family friendly activity is so inspiring for kids to go out there and see wildlife. And it really teaches them a lot about conservation and sustainability and our oceans and looking after our marine life, but I would just say that I know. I had three kids that were [00:08:00] all close together in age.

And when you go with very young kids, the boat can be quite choppy and you really need to have a hand free to keep hold of one of your kids to make sure that they're not going to fall over or not going to slide around on the deck or Um, it can be really difficult kind of going up and down stairs and kind of holding on and things like that.

I know for me personally, if I had three very young kids with me, it would have been quite stressful because you don't have enough hands for that many kids to keep hold of them. And I know that my boys particularly were little explorers, so they'd want to go off and do things and do Really, when you're on a boat that's wobbling around, especially if it's a really choppy day, you really need to have your hands free to be near them to just keep hold of them and make sure that they aren't going to fall over or to make sure that they've got a really good handhold on the barriers.

So for me, I waited until our kids were a bit older before I thought about taking them on a cruise like this, because I [00:09:00] just knew for my own sanity and my own peace of mind, it was easier when they were kind of nearer to the age of 10 rather than under five. I think if they'd been toddlers, that adds an extra complication.

You've got boogies and you've got kind of navigating around the boat. I'm not saying don't take them. I'm just saying that if you do take them, then just be prepared that you're going to. be looking after them a lot on the boat and it

might take away some of the enjoyment for you while you're kind of thinking about them rather than actually enjoying the experience.

The first time that I took one of my kids, I, I just took one of them because the other two do get a bit too seasick and I didn't want to risk taking them out on a, on a whale watching trip when they get so poorly. So it was my oldest twin that I took with me and he had a really great time. He would have been probably around 10 when we went on the trip and he loved it.

He got so much out of the trip. He really, really enjoyed it and that was great because I could [00:10:00] be so confident that he could hold on, he could walk around the boat on his own, he could kind of manoeuvre around, go and get a drink. So there's a few useful things that you might want to pack for your whale watching cruise, one of them being sunscreen.

Even though it's wintertime in Australia, The sun is really fierce and when you're out on the water, especially, you do not realize how quickly you're burning. So make sure you're wearing a hat, make sure you're reapplying sunscreen regularly, even if it feels like it's cloudy, even if it doesn't feel very hot.

Just trust me because I've burnt a few times when I've been out there, even after applying sunscreen regularly. So just keep it up every hour, reapplying. Taking a water bottle is a good idea. The whale watching cruises all have tea and coffee facilities and they have a bar and you can go and buy drinks and you can go and fill up cold water bottles and things like that.

But if you have a water bottle with you, if you're on deck, which is where I tend to spend all of my time on a whale watching trip, you don't have to kind of traipse down the, down the steps to go all the way down [00:11:00] to the, bottom to go to the bar to get a drink, you can just stay where you are and just have your own drink.

It really makes life so much easier. You don't have to risk missing any of the amazing sights in front of you. It goes without saying that you'll be taking your camera with you. Um, I think it's helpful to have a camera that's got a cord that goes around your neck just so that you can kind of let it go when you're, when you want to, you don't have to kind of worry about dropping it or anything like that.

If you're holding your phone, then you've got that worry of, of, If the boat rocks are you going to let go of the camera over the edge? That's really stressful. So

having an actual camera I think is really good and also you tend to get a better zoom on your normal camera too. Polarized sunglasses are a great addition to your kit when you're going on a whale watching cruise.

They really help you scan across the ocean surface and see what's going on. You can really clearly see things, so much clearer. I think I went on a wildlife cruise years ago now in Western Australia, [00:12:00] looking for dugongs, and I didn't have polarized sunglasses at the time, and my husband did. And he could see so much, and I just could, felt like I couldn't see anything.

And I couldn't believe it, the difference when I put on his polarized sunglasses, how much more I could see. So now I always make sure that I get polarized sunglasses. I have prescription ones. It's definitely just worth you having polarized sunglasses when it comes to going out in the ocean. As I mentioned, it is wintertime in Australia when you probably will be whale watching or maybe springtime.

You can get quite cold. It can get actually really cold. So I tend to go dressed for warmer weather with layers so that I can take things off if I need to. But usually I'm in jeans rather than shorts. It usually does get chilly on Really every trip I've been out on, it's been quite cold and windy because you're out in the open ocean, you really do feel the temperature drop.

[00:13:00] So be prepared for like dressing for warm weather, whether that's woolly hats and jumpers and fleeces and a jacket, just things that you can take off or put on if you need them. And a rain mack isn't a bad idea because sometimes it can rain while you're out and the crews will go ahead even if it's raining.

So a rain mack with a hood is really helpful because you're not going to be able to stand there with an umbrella while you're watching the whales. Just pull your hood up and carry on watching them and you, it won't matter that it's raining. So flat shoes, like runners, trainers, whatever you want to call them, sneakers, they're really good for whale watching crews.

You're going to be probably on your feet most of the day. I know you can sit inside to watch the whales, but it's way more fun if you go up to the top deck and you're watching them from outside. Just be prepared that the boat can shift around and if you've got something with a grip on your feet, it really helps you stay planted firmly still.

So flat shoes, don't wear heels, don't wear anything too fancy, just something flat and sturdy is a [00:14:00] really good option. You don't need to pack binoculars because the whales are usually so close to you, but all around you, and you usually get a really good sight. Well from my experience, that's been the experience anyway.

It is helpful sometimes to take binoculars to just have a look around, especially if you're going past any islands and things like that. You might be able to see some other wildlife around as well. So it is good to take them if you want to, but they are definitely an optional extra. I find it really helpful to pack everything for the day in a rucksack.

That way I can put it on my back. I don't have to think about my bag or carrying a handbag or putting something down. So it doesn't really matter if the water's choppy and you're kind of getting thrown around a little bit. Your bag's just on your back all day and it doesn't cause you any issues. And then it also keeps your hands free as well, so that you've got two hands for holding on.

So that can be really helpful if you're walking around the boat and it's choppy so that you can keep your hand on the railings at all time. So I'll [00:15:00] just leave you with a few finishing tips, taking photos of whales. is really hard. I've tried it lots of times. It's really amazing to try to capture that amazing shot, but it's really hard to know where they're going to appear, when they're going to kind of jump out of the water, when they're going to breach.

It's really difficult. So if you really are into wildlife photography, give it a go, but it's also a really nice opportunity to put the camera down for a bit. And just be in the moment and enjoy your surroundings and enjoy what you're seeing and making memories. So while it's great to have the camera, and it's so exciting if you do manage to capture that amazing, elusive shot, it's not only about capturing the images, it's about the experiences that you're having.

It's about these amazing, majestic creatures. It is just a Exceptional. Honestly, I love doing it. I just get so excited about the idea of going and I am really, really looking forward to going again in a couple of weeks [00:16:00] time. By the time this episode comes out, I will have been, so we'll be able to tell you a little bit more in the Facebook group about what the experience was like, but I'm really, really looking forward to it.

When it comes to booking a whale watching cruise, there are usually a few different ticket level options that you can choose from. For me personally, I've always found that booking the cheapest level is usually the best for me, because

I know they do the VIP seating lounges and things like that. I don't sit inside because I really, get so much more out of the experience by being on the top deck, looking out across the water.

I just don't think you get the same experience when you're sitting inside in the air conditioned cabin. But if that's something that is important to you, having reserved seating, then there are options usually for a more VIP package. But for me, I just love being outside in the fresh air. So I hope you enjoyed this episode all about whale watching.

I hope it inspires you to look up some whale watching opportunities where you live or where you're moving to in Australia. I [00:17:00] cannot recommend going out whale watching enough because it is so incredible. It's such an amazing experience. It really is one of those bucket list experiences. And the best bit is living here now.

I get to do it every single year. So if you found this episode helpful or inspiring or useful, I would love it. If you would please leave a review, it really does help more people discover the podcast. There'll be more from me next week. And in the meantime, let's get building your new life in Australia.

One episode at a time.