



# Adventures in Oz 2025





A Travel Book by



Graham Smith & Fiona Smith

November 22 – December 19, 2025

# Adventures in Oz 2025



When Fee decided she would not continue to work when her contract came up for renewal in November. Graham seized on the opportunity to organise a trip to Australia.



**168**

footprints



**5**

countries



**28**

days



**24.2k**

miles





## Prologue

 November 22, 2025 in England, East Hampshire

In May 2025, Fee decides that she does not want to continue working when her contract comes up for renewal in November.

Graham immediately checks on the exact date; 21st of November.

Their previous adventure to the other side of the world had only included a week in Sydney with the other three weeks spent travelling around New Zealand.

So the following day, Graham is in the Travel Agent booking flights to Sydney for 23rd November as a starting point for a month long Australian adventure.

Fee decides that one day is not sufficient time to prepare for such a trip and schedules her remaining annual leave so that she can finish on 17th November.

Graham thinks that six months is plenty time to prepare. But then again, he is already retired, chilled and free from the stresses of work.

**Time**

8:00 am

**Cloudy**

 7 °C

**Altitude**

236 ft






Day 1

# Ready to go

 November 22, 2025 in England, East Hampshire

Paddington digs out his passport and everyone is checked in online.

Today is all about packing and getting ready. It's an early start tomorrow morning with the taxi coming at 05:40

-  Dawn Baxendale The New Zealand contingent (Scott and Dawn) are really looking forward to sharing their week together in Melbourne before driving the Great Ocean road to Adelaide whilst Graham and Fi go onto to Brisbane.
-  Dawn Baxendale This could become a bi annual event !!
-  Graham Smith Not sure we can afford that 😊

**Time**  
8:03 am

**Cloudy**  
 7 °C

**Altitude**  
233 ft



Day 2



## Lounging

 November 23, 2025 in England, Crawley

By 7:05 we have been dropped off at the special Emirates Drop Off point at Gatwick, had our bags taken to Checkin, Checked in, through Security and into the Emirates Lounge.

And now we can breathe !

**Time**

7:04 am

**Rain**



**Altitude**

217 ft



Day 2

## Breakfast in lounge

 November 23, 2025 in England, Crawley



Delicious breakfast, lovely choices. I went for a Buddha bowl followed by French toast with raspberries. 😊

Time

8:12 am

Rain

 9 °C

Altitude

220 ft



Day 2

# On board

 November 23, 2025 in England, Crawley



Found our seats and ready to go, just need a glass of champagne 🍷

Time

9:05 am

Rain

 10 °C

Altitude

190 ft





Day 2

# Takeoff

 November 23, 2025 in England, Crawley



Excellent camera on the tail

Time

7:56 pm

Clear night



Altitude

180 ft



بطاقة ارشادات الأمان  
بداخل جيب المقعد أمامك

SAFETY CARD

سترة النجاة تحت المقعد  
LIFE VEST UNDER YOUR SEAT

إربط الحزام أثناء الجلوس  
PLEASE FASTEN SEAT BELT WHILE SEATED



16000754

Day 2



# Hanging on!

 November 23, 2025 in England, Crawley

They didn't tell me my seat  was on the tail! 

Time

8:02 pm

Clear night

 5 °C

Altitude

161 ft

Video



Day 2

# Lounge Bar

 November 23, 2025 in Ukraine, Vyshnivchyk

Such fun in the lounge bar at 39,000 ft

Time

11:59 pm

Rain



Altitude

984 ft





Day 3



# Loungewear

November 24, 2025, Indian Ocean

Thought we'd try the midflight loungewear. Very becoming we think

Time

7:00 am

Clear day

☀️ 28 °C

Altitude

Sea level



Day 3



# Arrived

 November 24, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Arrived safely in Sydney. 7:30 in the evening on Monday we think 🤔

Time

7:26 pm

Partly cloudy

 20 °C

Altitude


36 ft

Video





## Balmoral Boatshed

 November 25, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

After a good night's sleep we awake to a hot sunny day.

The boys go off to work and Monique takes Tess to school.

Then Monique, Fee and Graham drive over to Balmoral to catch some rays on the beach followed by lunch at The Boatshed, Balmoral Beach

Balmoral Beach is in the Mosman area of the North Shore. It's actually two beaches, Balmoral and Edwards, separated by Rocky Point Island.

**Time**

11:44 am

**Clear day**

 25 °C

**Altitude**

20 ft









## BBQ

 November 25, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

A pleasant evening was had by all at home enjoying some excellent steak cooked expertly on the BBQ by Monique. This was accompanied by much laughter, stories, and a glass or two of wine.

On this occasion, Shea brings along his girlfriend, Rose, who is a lovely young lady who happens to be an identical twin. Fortunately for everyone (or particularly for Shea ?) they keep their hair different so you can tell them apart.

What a lovely first day in Sydney.

**Time**

9:58 pm

**Clear night**

 24 °C

**Altitude**

669 ft





## Summer in the City

 November 26, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

An early start today. We are taking Tess to school and then Monique is driving us in to the house in Lavender Bay where Graham, Fee and Paddington will spend a couple of days exploring the city before meeting up with the family again.

Looks like it's gonna be another hot one ☀️

Quin and Shea are working. Don't worry guys, it's nearly the weekend.

**Time**

6:11 am

**Clear day**

☀️ 21 °C

**Altitude**

669 ft

Day 5



# Lavender Bay

 November 26, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

We arrive at the Lavender Bay house which has the most amazing views of the harbour

Time

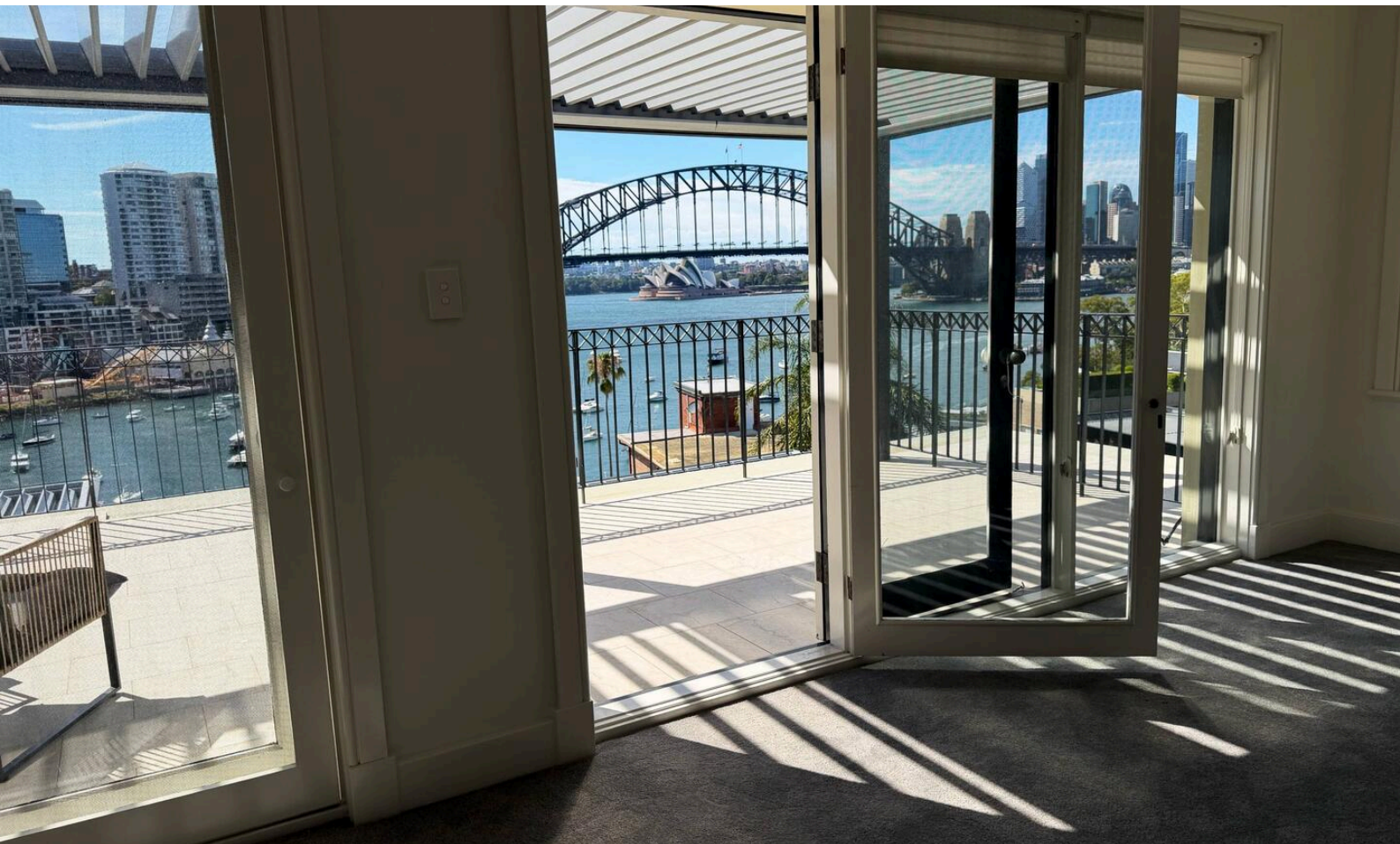
9:30 am

Clear day

 30 °C

Altitude

52 ft





Day 5



# Coffee

 November 26, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

After dropping off the bags we pop out for some supplies and a cup of coffee in the nearby Piato restaurant.

**Time**

10:05 am

**Clear day**

 31 °C

**Altitude**

141 ft



Day 5



# Ferry

 November 26, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

We walk down to Milsons Point to pick up a ferry to Barangaroo. We look back and can pick out the house from across the bay.

Time

11:00 am

Clear day

 32 °C

Altitude

10 ft





Day 5



# Stormy weather

 November 26, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Whilst walking around the Barangaroo Reserve we notice some ominous looking dark clouds coming in. It's over 30c but it definitely looks like rain.

Time

12:30 pm

Clear day

 32 °C

Altitude

16 ft





Day 5



# El Camino Cantina


 November 26, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

We make it to El Camino tex-mex cantina in the Rocks area for lunch.

While we are there, the rain buckets down outside for maybe an hour. Good excuse for a second beer 🍷

We hear from Monique and a major storm has moved through the Sydney area causing significant damage and power outages, including around the beach house she has up in Clareville.

Fingers crossed there isn't too much damage 🙏

 Molly Duff Ooh that looks yummy!

**Time**

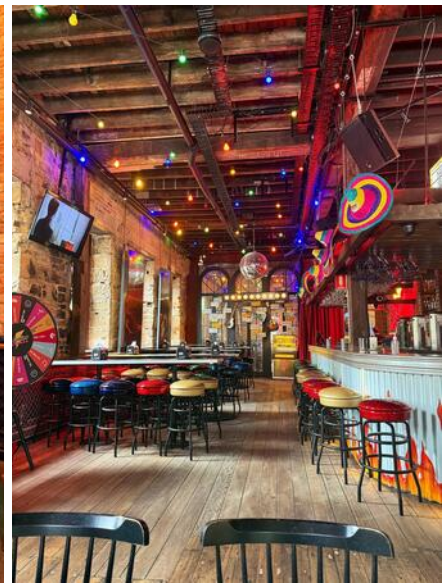
12:38 pm

**Clear day**

 32 °C

**Altitude**

62 ft



Day 5



# Storm damage

 November 26, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Oh dear, there goes the hire car 🤯

Time

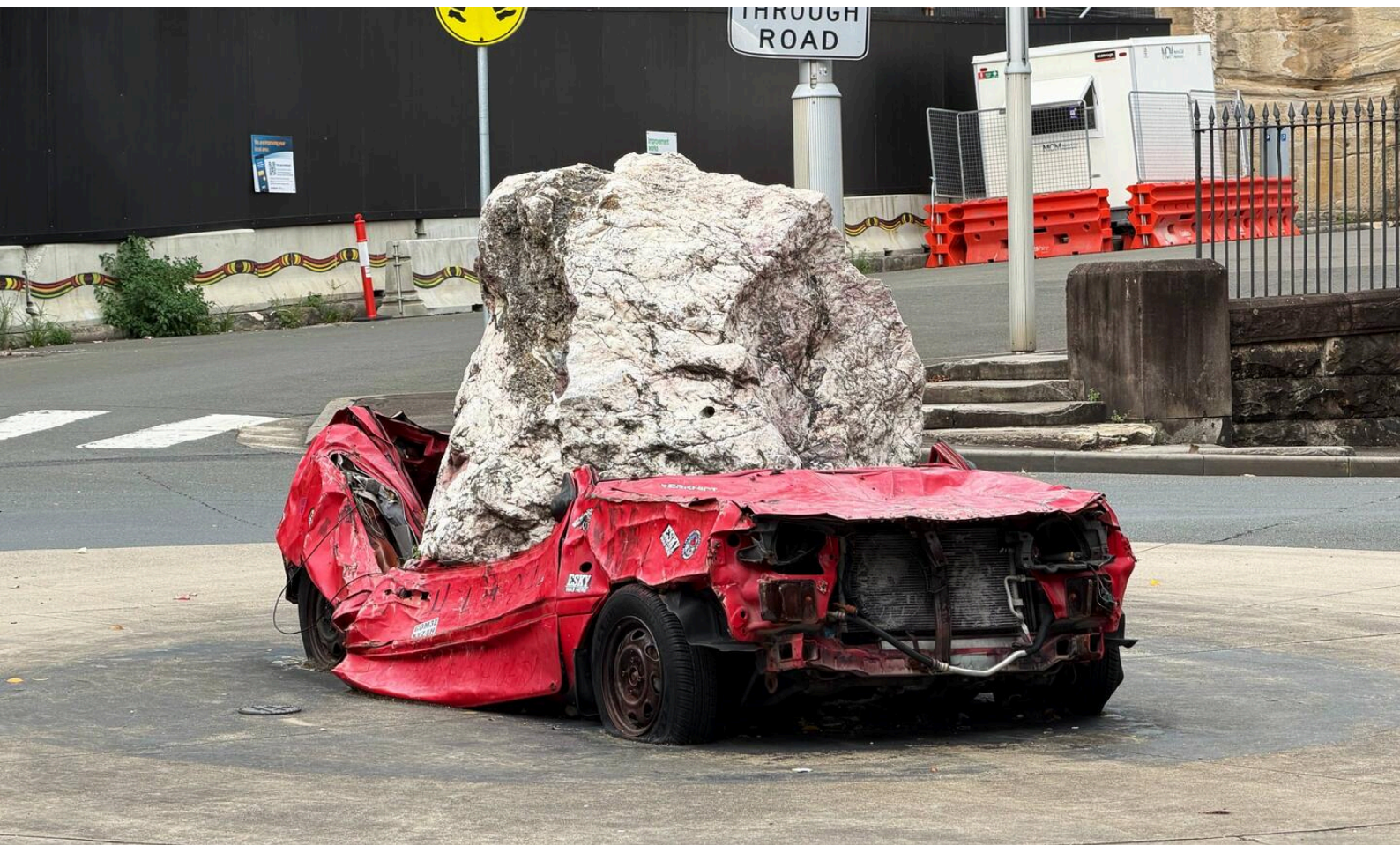
2:00 pm

Clear day

 33 °C

Altitude

20 ft



Day 5




## Sunny again

 November 26, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

By the time we have finished lunch, the clouds have gone, clear blue skies have returned and it's still in the 30s.

We walk around the shops for a while and then catch the ferry from Circular Quay back across to Lavender Bay.

It's definitely harder work walking up to the house including 77 steps up the hillside.

 Molly Duff Wow you guys are packing it all in ! Looks like you are having a fab time ! ❤️

Time

3:05 pm

Windy

 34 °C

Altitude

56 ft







# Tapas

 November 26, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Just down the road is a Tapas restaurant which looks very inviting so that is where we eat this evening. As usual with these things we end up ordering more than we can eat. You have to, in order to get the variety, as the individual portions are so big.

Afterwards we walk down to McMahons Point which is another nearby Ferry Wharf.

The walk back from McMahons Point to the house is a steady climb rather than the flat walk followed by steep steps up from Milson's Point.

Not sure which is easier, but it's a shorter, more direct ferry ride from Milson's Point to Circular Quay (which is the main hub).

News is still coming in regarding the impact of the storm which came through earlier. Our plans for the rest of the week may have to change if we get more of the same.

**Time**

6:20 pm

**Clear day**

 32 °C

**Altitude**


121 ft







## Sydney City Sunrise

 November 27, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

The first birds singing in the bushes.  
The first helicopters buzzing overhead.  
The first trains rumbling along.  
The first buses crossing the bridge.  
The first kayakers annoying the first ferries.  
The first joggers losing their first kilos.

**Time**

6:10 am

**Clear day**

 19 °C

**Altitude**

52 ft

**Video**



Day 6



# Brekkie

 November 27, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Brekkie today is at Breadworks Cafe. Vegetarian Breakfast does the job and sets us up for the day.

**Time**

7:36 am

**Clear day**

 20 °C

**Altitude**

118 ft





# Spider

 November 27, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Walking between the front door and the gate can be like running the gauntlet. The spiders like to build their webs across the path to surprise the unsuspecting arachnophobes.

We employ the use of a 'spider stick' to clear the way



Fiona Smith These fellas keep rebuilding

**Time**

8:28 am

**Clear day**

 23 °C

**Altitude**

105 ft



16:48

5G

Spider Identification



Garden Orb Weaving Spider •  
Identification • Distribution • ...

Visit >

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Q australia common garden spiders — Private



## Wharf 2 to Manly

 November 27, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

The fast ferry takes us from Circular Quay to Manly.

On the way we catch sight of Balmoral Beach where we went a couple of days ago.

**Time**

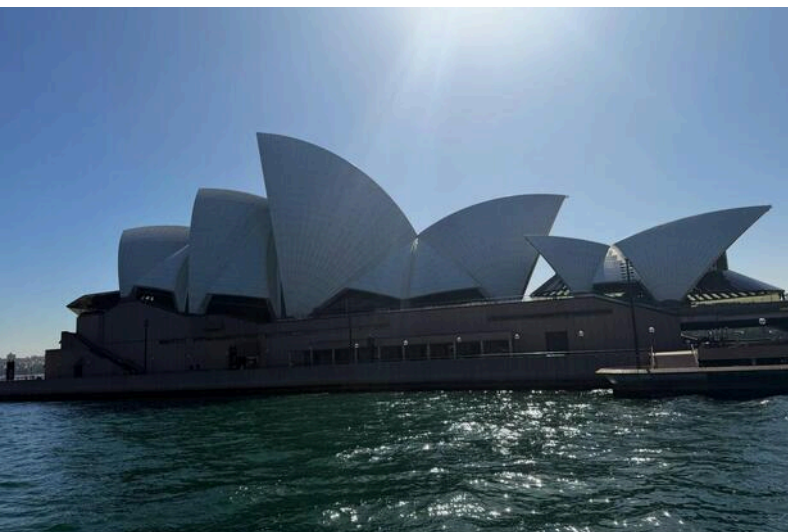
8:53 am

**Clear day**

 23 °C

**Altitude**

89 ft






## Very Manly looking

 November 27, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Manly Beach is a short walk from the wharf and it is bigger and busier than we'd imagined.

There are lots of current warnings but the surfers are determined.

Further up the beach it is safer and loads of school kids are getting lessons in swimming and surfing 

**Time**

10:00 am

**Clear day**

 26 °C

**Altitude**

43 ft



Day 6



# Paddle

 November 27, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

We walk along to Shelly Beach where a paddle in the shallows is enough to cool off

Time

11:07 am

Clear day

 23 °C

Altitude

16 ft





Day 6



# Brush Turkey

 November 27, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

A brush turkey decides he wants to join us when we stop for a cold drink



Fiona Smith The turkey birds pop up everywhere

Time

11:22 am

Clear day

 23 °C

Altitude

16 ft



Day 6



# Lizards

 November 27, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

On the way back towards Manly we find a standoff between a brush turkey and a lizard

Time

11:50 am

Clear day

 30 °C

Altitude

26 ft





Day 6



# Swim beach

 November 27, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Just by the wharf is a lovely little beach with safe swimming enclosed by shark nets (to keep them out, not in)

Time

12:40 pm

Clear day

 31 °C

Altitude

30 ft





Day 6



# Sonny

 November 27, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

And right next to the wee beach is Felons Brewing Company which is essentially a bar and seafood restaurant.

Graham discovers they have Sonny cider which turns out to be the first real dry cider similar to Aspalls. Most other ciders tend to be sweet and apply.

Graham and Fiona both partake in a glass of Sonny with ice to quench their thirst.

The barman is very friendly and chatty. He is preparing a Piña Colada slush in bulk but needs to have it tasted before committing to a full production.

He doesn't need to ask twice.



Fiona Smith I could get used to Pina Colada slushes! A perfect slush with no brain freeze 🍹

Time

1:00 pm

Clear day

 31 °C

Altitude


Sea level







# Sydney Opera House

 November 27, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

After a light snack to accompany the Sonny, we catch the ferry back to Circular Quay.

We pay a visit to the Opera House which is as impressive close up as it is from afar



Fiona Smith I ordered Greek salad but the waiter misheard and brought me a little gem lettuce with a salad dressing. I think I lost weight eating it! 😂

**Time**

2:30 pm

**Clear day**

 32 °C

**Altitude**

Sea level



Day 6



## Quick one

 November 27, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

A quick drink in the wine bar before dinner across the road

Time

6:55 pm

Clear day

 28 °C

Altitude

148 ft



Day 6



## It's all Greek

 November 27, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

We eat at Piato restaurant and share a greek platter. Fee has a glass of Rosé, Graham has a Mythos beer. It's all very authentic and reminds us of times on the Greek islands.

**Time**

7:20 pm

**Clear day**

 27 °C

**Altitude**

135 ft



Day 6



## Nightcap

 November 27, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

We sneak back into Delicado for a nightcap before heading home for our last night at Lavender Bay

Time

8:32 pm

Clear night

 24 °C

Altitude

144 ft

Day 7



# Moving on

 November 28, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

One more view from Lavender Bay before it's time to move on



Fiona Smith Another beautiful day x

Time

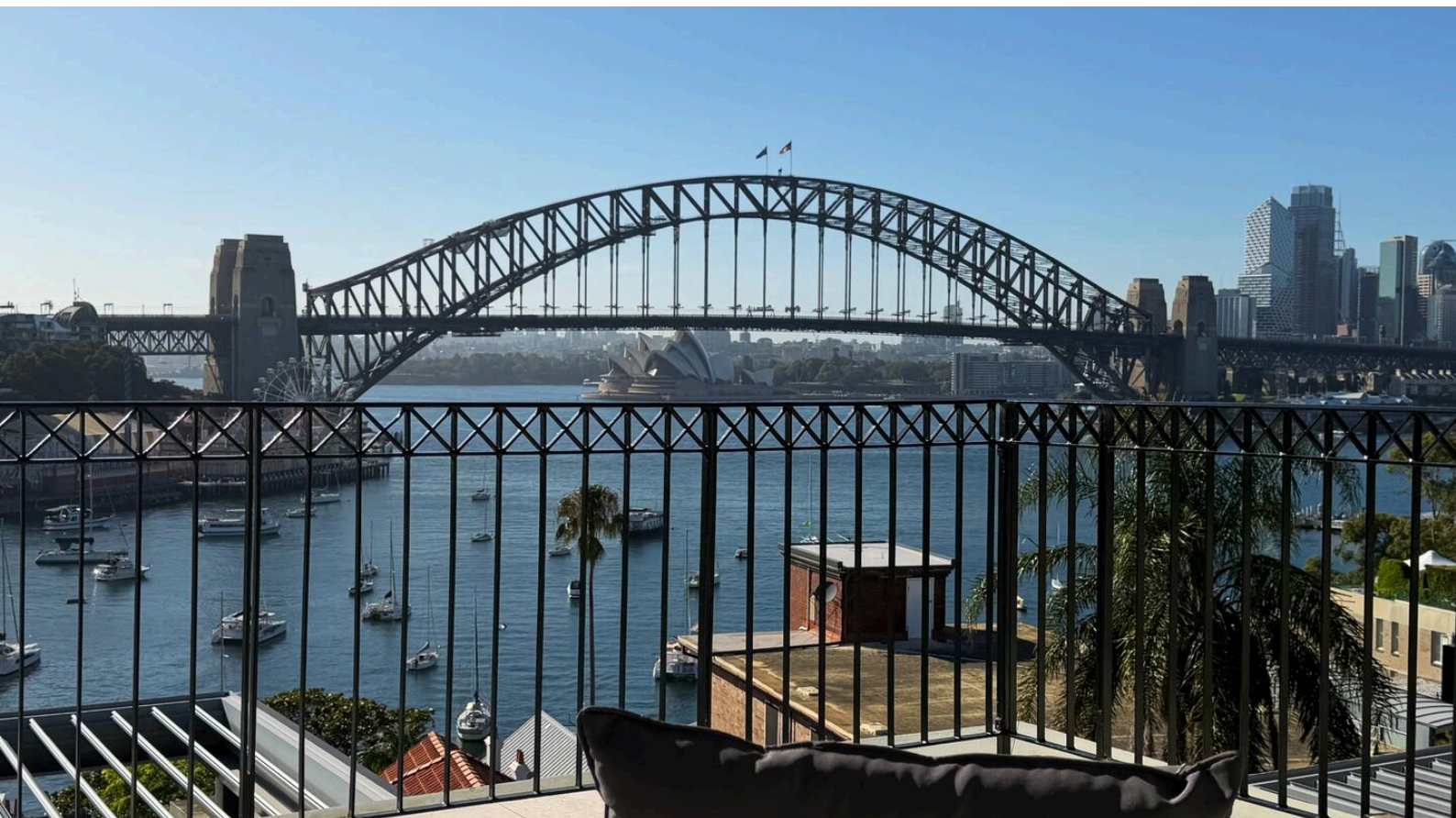
8:15 am

Clear day

 20 °C

Altitude

56 ft



Day 7



# Clareville

 November 28, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Next stop is the house at Clareville in the North Shores.

With boat

What's not to like



Fiona Smith Monique has done the house up beautifully, I love it here 🥰❤️

**Time**

11:14 am

**Clear day**

 24 °C

**Altitude**

49 ft







Day 7







# Kayak

 November 28, 2025 in Australia, Northern Beaches Council

Lunchtime involves a short(ish) kayak ride from the house to a nearby beach followed by lunch, wine and beer.

Then a paddle back to the house

-  Olivia Duff The water looks beautiful!!
-  Fiona Smith The water was gorgeous and warm.
-  Fiona Smith Kayaking was great fun 😊. Coming back was easier as we had the wind behind us 🌬️
-  Donald Hunter Probably also downhill 😊

Time

12:41 pm

Clear day

 25 °C

Altitude

30 ft

Video







Day 7



# Bat Time

 November 28, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

After eating dinner we spend the evening watching the world go by outside.

Boats come and go, the sun sets, and then, whilst we are minding our business sipping Gin and Tonics, some bats arrive in the palm trees. Great big things.

Then we see a complete halo around the moon. Apparently this often means there could be snow the next day. Let's hope not because we are supposed to be going out on the boat tomorrow 🙄



Fiona Smith The fruit bats 🦇 have one meter wing spread, quite big! The halo around the moon was incredible, I have never seen this before, quite special x

Time

8:50 pm

Cloudy

 22 °C

Altitude

52 ft

Video








Day 8



## Fuel up

 November 29, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Captain Mon and First Mate Quinlan take the boat out to fill up with fuel.

Time

8:13 am

Cloudy

 24 °C

Altitude

52 ft


Video



Day 8



# Avalon

 November 29, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

After brekkie we all go into Avalon to do some shopping and pop into Bar Elvina for refreshments.

Time

12:00 pm

Partly cloudy




Altitude

69 ft





## Home and Away

 November 29, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

After Avalon, we drive up to Palm Beach which is very posh, and where they film Home and Away at Summer Bay.

Everyone shares Fish and Chips at The Joey Palm Beach

**Time**

2:00 pm

**Partly cloudy**

 29 °C

**Altitude**

20 ft





Day 8



# Lovat

 November 29, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

For our last evening in the North Shore area we have a delicious meal in Lovat on the beach in Avalon. Great food and the most amazing views of the sea from the table.

The whole area is a delight, the local people, people in the shops and restaurants; it really is a fab place to be.

**Time**

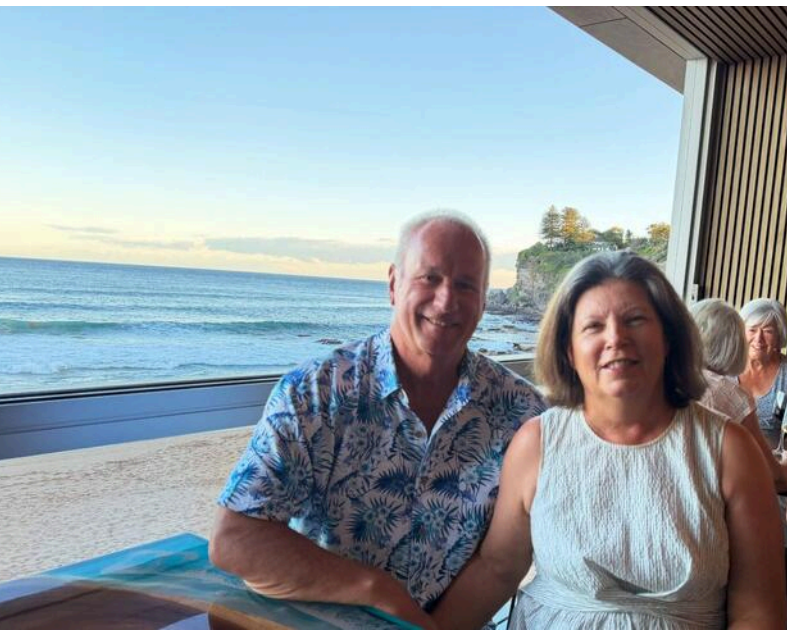
7:17 pm

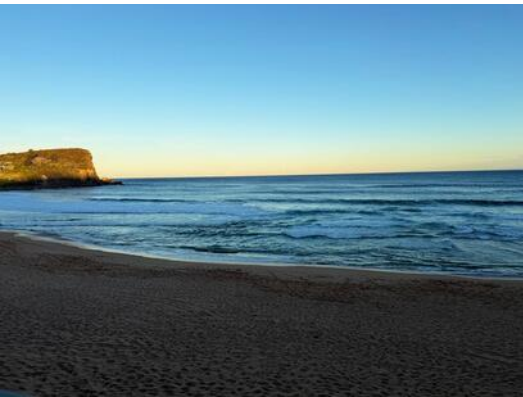
**Clear day**

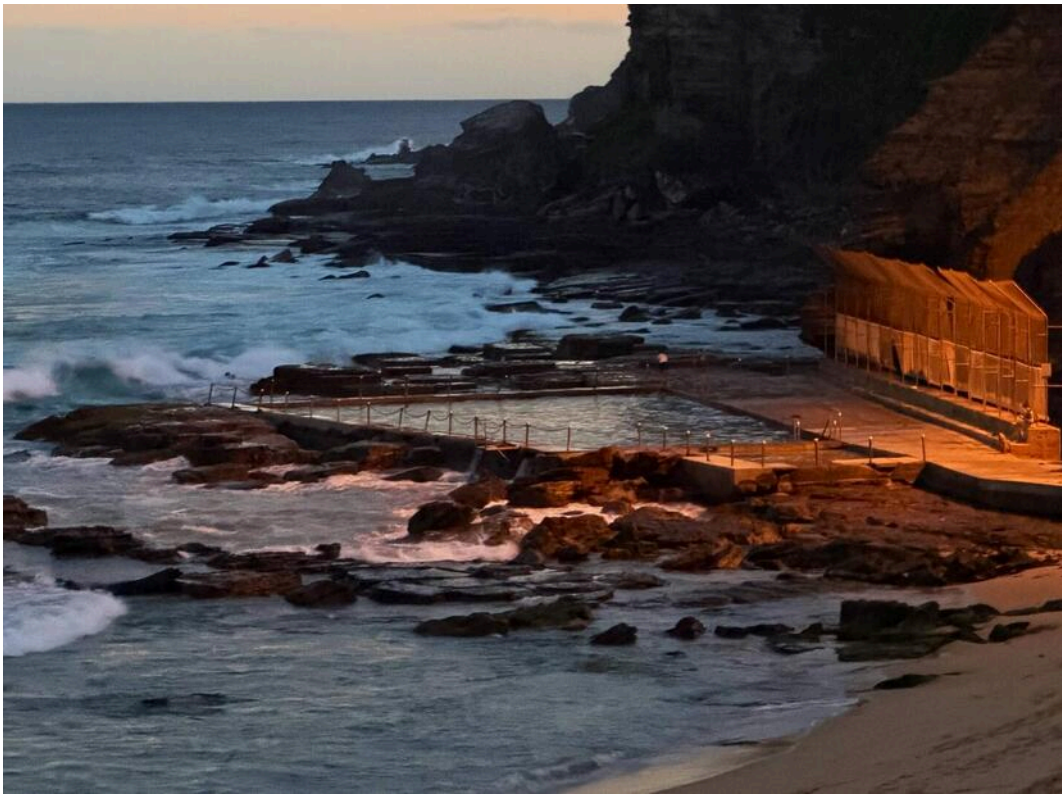
 25 °C

**Altitude**

66 ft







Day 9



# Morning

 November 30, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Another lovely morning. Quin and Tess have gone on a coffee run before we all prepare for a day on the bay

Time

7:44 am

Clear day

 19 °C

Altitude


52 ft



Day 9






# St Andrews Day

 November 30, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Happy St Andrews Day everybody  



Donald Hunter Happy St Andrew's Day too, delighted to see you're having a great trip. I see Paddington is suitably attired for the occasion.   

**Time**

8:00 am

**Clear day**

 19 °C

**Altitude**

669 ft



Day 9



# Pittwater

 November 30, 2025 in Australia, Northern Beaches Council

Shea, Rose and Graham go into Avalon for the supplies needed for a brunch out on the water.

Captain Mon and First Mate Quin go to prepare the boat.

By 9am we are all ready to board and head up northwards to Pittwater and Palm Beach.

On the way we see a cute little house on the water, which is actually a very expensive BnB

**Time**

9:17 am

**Clear day**



**Altitude**

Sea level










## Gunyah Beach

 November 30, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Just before the water heads out into the ocean, we take a left to Gunyah Beach where we anchor off.

We can see, on the beach, tables laid out for a party of about 20 who later turned up for a celebration meal.

This is time for brunch and a swim in the sea.

A jellyfish takes a leisurely swim past

**Time**

9:21 am

**Clear day**

 21 °C

**Altitude**

23 ft







Day 9



# Eagles

 November 30, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Up in the trees we spot a couple of eagles. We're not sure if they have young ones or whether they are just passing through.

Time

10:17 am

Clear day

 23 °C

Altitude

Sea level







# Brooklyn Bridge

 November 30, 2025 in Australia, Central Coast Council

On the way back we first go up to Brooklyn Bridge.

The Brooklyn Bridge is actually a local nickname for the Hawkesbury River Bridge.

Time

10:18 am

Clear day

 23 °C

Altitude

Sea level

Video








Day 9



# Scotland Island

 November 30, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Before arriving back at Clareville, we go around Scotland Island.

Scotland Island has a reputation of being a little bit odd. Whether this is about in-breeding or dark rituals or just general feral behaviour we are not sure.



Donald Hunter Didn't know Scotland was an island; when did they cut themselves adrift? I suppose that explains the weird behaviour 😊😅



Fiona Smith 😊

**Time**

1:05 pm

**Cloudy**

 24 °C

**Altitude**

256 ft






Day 9



# Clareville to Dural

 November 30, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

One last view from the Beach House (Audrey) in Clareville before we head back to Dural where Monique does us proud by serving up bangers and mash.

More stories and more laughter with the family.

A big thanks to Monique and her wonderful family for their fantastic hospitality during our stay with them in Sydney.

What a lovely way to sign off the first chapter of this adventure.



Fiona Smith Thank you Monique and family for making our time with you truly memorable. See you soon! ❤️

**Time**

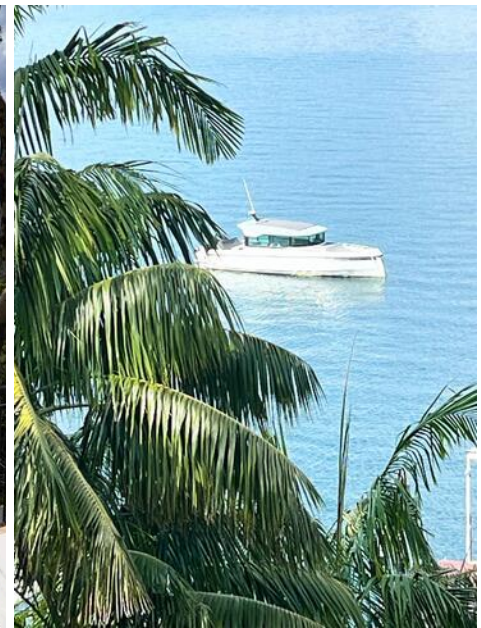
2:28 pm

**Cloudy**

 24 °C

**Altitude**


52 ft



Day 10



# Taxi

 December 1, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Taxi arrives on time to take us to the Central Railway Station.

Time

5:52 am

Clear day

 12 °C


Altitude

669 ft





## Harbour Bridge

 December 1, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Our journey takes us over Sydney Harbour Bridge, which is a first for us.

There is a lane for joggers, a lane for walkers, several lanes for cars, and railway lines; a truly multi-functional bridge.

**Time**

6:29 am

**Clear day**

 15 °C


**Altitude**

75 ft





## Central Station

 December 1, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

The station is quite ornate.

There is even a piece of artwork depicting a train going over the Brooklyn Bridge which we went below on the boat yesterday.

**Time**

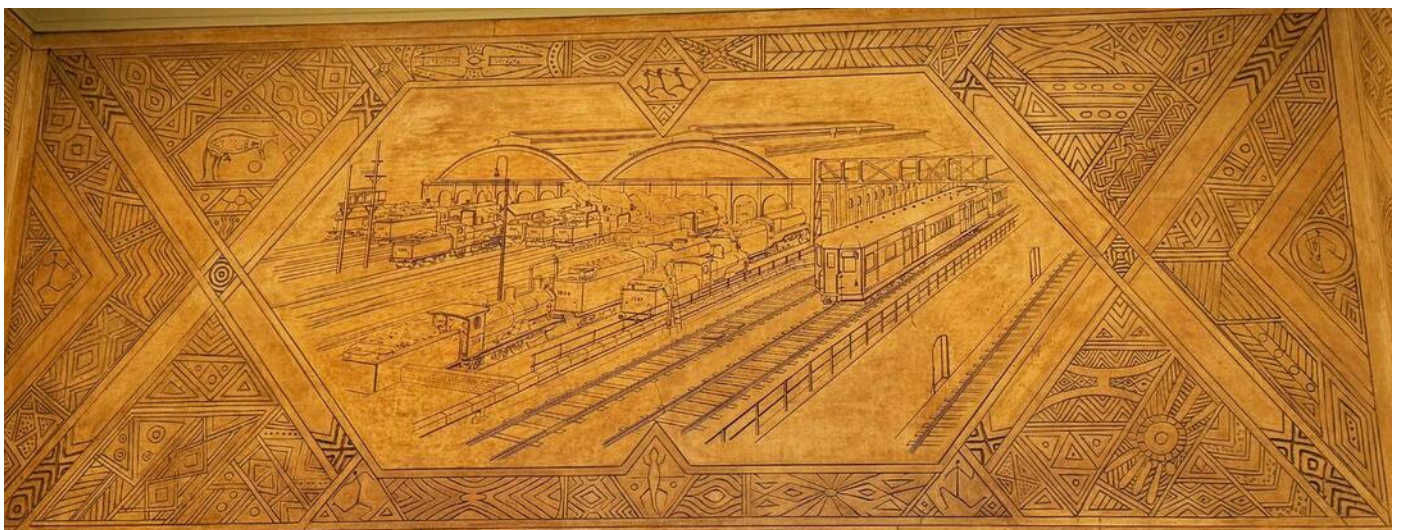
6:51 am

**Clear day**

 15 °C

**Altitude**

56 ft






Day 10



# All Aboard

 December 1, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

We are all aboard and ready to go on time

Time

7:38 am

Clear day

 17 °C

Altitude

79 ft





## Let the train take the strain



December 1, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

Goodbye Sydney, hello train  
Goodbye sunshine, hello rain  
Ten hour journey, seats are found  
Off we go we're Melbourne bound

Small towns come and small towns go  
Some have stations, some say no  
All have hotels, sell cheap beer  
Some don't even know we're here.

Cootamundra then Junee  
Wagga Wagga then Henty  
The Rock and others in between,  
We have a good look but we're never seen

Fields with cattle, fields with sheep  
Fields with nothing but lonely trees  
Fields with horses, lots of farms  
Rusty tractors, broke up cars

Seats are comfy, though it takes all day  
The Coffee's hot, the food's okay  
Our rolling stock gathers no moss  
And here we are at Southern Cross



That is awesome [Monique Doyle]

Time  
6:45 pm

Partly cloudy  
☁️ 15 °C

Altitude  
52 ft















Day 10



## Scott and Dawn

 December 1, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

Having arrived in Melbourne, we meet up with Scott and Dawn at the Air BnB and then go out for Italian at Teatro Gastronomia on the Southbank

**Time**

10:02 pm

**Partly cloudy**

 12 °C

**Altitude**

33 ft

Day 11



# Air BnB

 December 2, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

The Air BnB chosen by Scott and Dawn is in a fantastic location with great views over the city,

This morning we are greeted by hot air balloons.



Wonderful morning [Scott]



The balloons get their air from the air bnb. [Scott]



Graham Smith Full of hot air Scott

**Time**

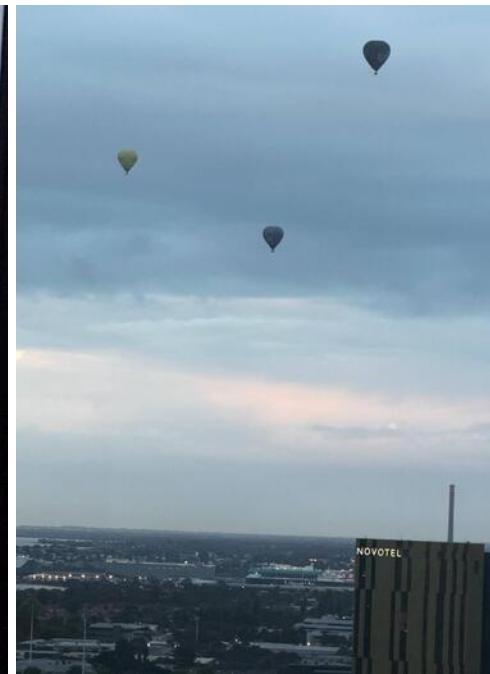
6:11 am

**Cloudy**

 9 °C

**Altitude**

85 ft





Day 11



# Puffing Billy

 December 2, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

Graham's choice of tourist trip for the team is a visit to the Puffing Billy steam train and Rainforest experience. We have a 45 minute minibus journey out of Melbourne.



I think there's an annual race between Puffing Billy and runners; attracts competitive runners from all over. [Don]



Fiona Smith I just looked it up. The main race is 13.5km, looks fun 😊xx

Time

9:42 am

Cloudy

 12 °C

Altitude

692 ft

Video






Day 11



# End of the line

 December 2, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

We come to the end of the train journey through the rainforest and have a cup of coffee before getting back on the minibus.

 Fiona Smith Paddington had the best day 🥰

Time

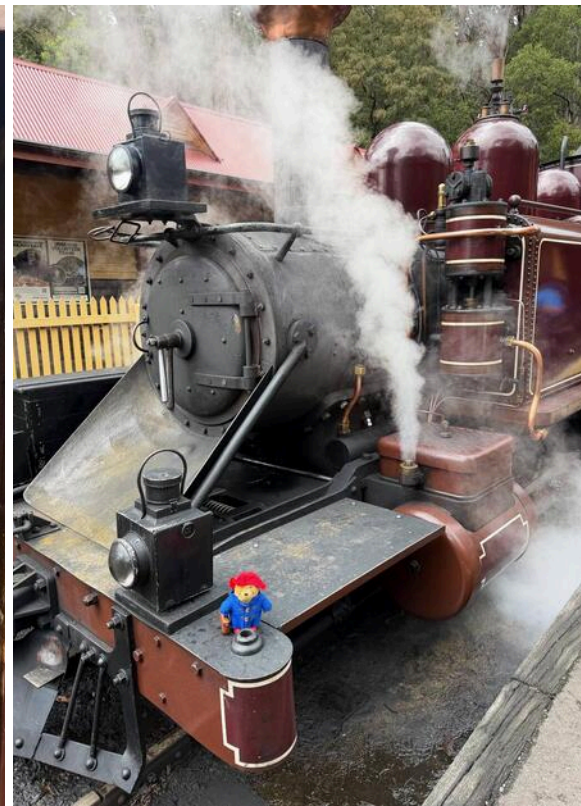
12:17 pm

Cloudy

 14 °C

Altitude

863 ft





**THE UPPER FERNTREE GULLY - GEMBROOK RAILWAY 1900 - 1953**

The Puffing Billy Railway is a genuine living museum, part of the original Victorian Railways branch line between Upper Ferntree Gully and Gembrook. Opened in 1900, the line has served commuters and farmers in the Dandenong Ranges, and gave both hills its name to the world.

The "Little Train", as it was known, carried passengers, mail, newspapers, timber, produce, farm produce, fruit trees and even beer for the past 150 years. Over all of that time, it has been a vital part of the local community. As a result, it has been preserved and is now a major attraction for visitors to the area.

In 1953, the railway started carrying large numbers of tourists through the Dandenong Ranges, and the Puffing Billy Railway was born. It has since become a major attraction for visitors to the area.

Improvements in road transport meant the gradual decline of the railway, and in 1953, it was closed. It was not until 1962, when a group of enthusiasts formed the Puffing Billy Preservation Society, that the railway was saved. The Society has since worked hard to restore the railway to its original state, and it is now a major attraction for visitors to the area.

**THE PRESERVATION ERA - 1954 TO THE PRESENT DAY**

In December 1954, "The Train" was put on its feet once again. The Puffing Billy Preservation Society was formed in 1955, and the railway was opened to the public. The Society has since worked hard to restore the railway to its original state, and it is now a major attraction for visitors to the area.

In 1954, just as the train started moving, disaster struck! The opening of the line was marred by a landslide. The landslide was caused by the heavy rain that fell on the line on 23rd February 1954. The landslide was caused by the heavy rain that fell on the line on 23rd February 1954. The landslide was caused by the heavy rain that fell on the line on 23rd February 1954.

On 23rd Feb 1962, heavy rain caused the complete closure of Puffing Billy. In November 1962, the line was re-opened as a branch line between Gembrook and Upper Ferntree Gully. The line was re-opened as a branch line between Gembrook and Upper Ferntree Gully. The line was re-opened as a branch line between Gembrook and Upper Ferntree Gully.

In 1968, Puffing Billy is the oldest railway in the world.

**PUFFING BILLY TODAY**

A fleet of main and diesel locomotives haul today's trains. For the first time, the Victorian Railways has been used for over 100 years. In fact, the line is now used for over 100 years. In fact, the line is now used for over 100 years.

Today, the Puffing Billy Railway has become a major attraction for visitors to the area. It has become a major attraction for visitors to the area. It has become a major attraction for visitors to the area.

Most people who go on the railway are tourists, people who go back to the Puffing Billy site. The railway has about 100,000 visitors, and it is a major attraction for visitors to the area. It has become a major attraction for visitors to the area.

The railway has about 100,000 visitors, and it is a major attraction for visitors to the area. It has become a major attraction for visitors to the area.

The railway has about 100,000 visitors, and it is a major attraction for visitors to the area. It has become a major attraction for visitors to the area.





Day 11



# Great Northern

 December 2, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

After a walk around the city we stop for a Great Northern super crisp.

This is what Fee calls Graham's holiday beer 🍺

Time

4:05 pm

Cloudy

 18 °C

Altitude

49 ft





## The Pub

 December 2, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

Before dinner we decide to go to The Pub for a drink or two.

We are roped into an interactive Quiz Night, in which we come 16 out of 17 because we know zip about Australian tv or current affairs.



**Fiona Smith** Finding The Pub was another challenge! Google Maps took us all the way round for us to find a note in the door to use the main entrance and sent us in a wild goose chase back to where we started! Eventually finding out the main entrance was on the left and we had gone right! 😅

**Time**

5:40 pm

**Partly cloudy**

 18 °C

**Altitude**

52 ft





## Bistro Guillaume

 December 2, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

The walk from The Pub to Bistro Guillaume in the Crown complex is all the way through the casino. We've never seen such an expanse of Roulette wheels, card tables, pokies (fruit machines) etc but eventually we reach the restaurant.

No pictures, but the food, wine, conversation and laughter over the next two hours is exhilarating.

We realise we have known each other for nearly 20 years.

Much to reminisce about.

**Time**

7:50 pm

**Clear day**

 16 °C

**Altitude**

46 ft


Day 11




# Christmas Lights

 December 2, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

Before bed, there is just time to take in the light shows from the apartment balcony.

 Amazing views [Frank]

 Fiona Smith The apartment we are staying in is on the 28th floor and lift takes about 10 seconds!

Time

10:29 pm

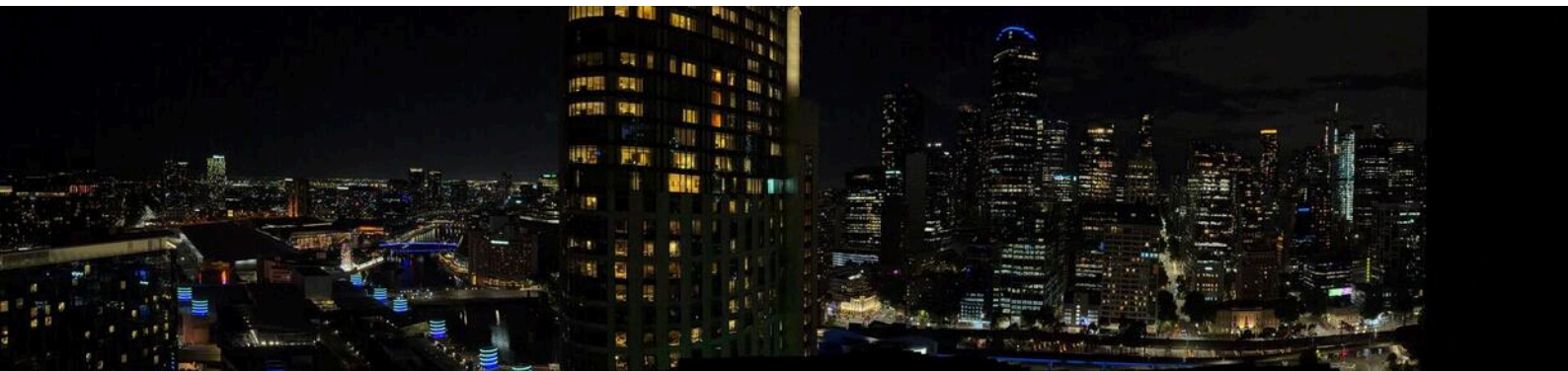
Partly cloudy

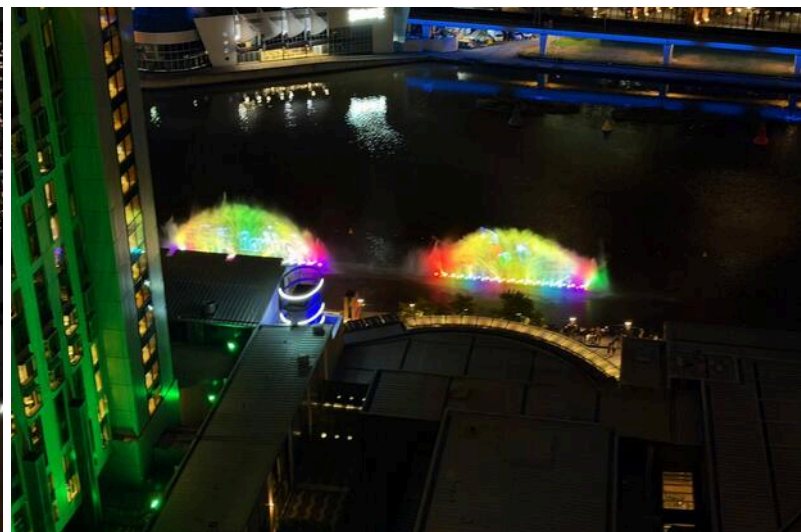
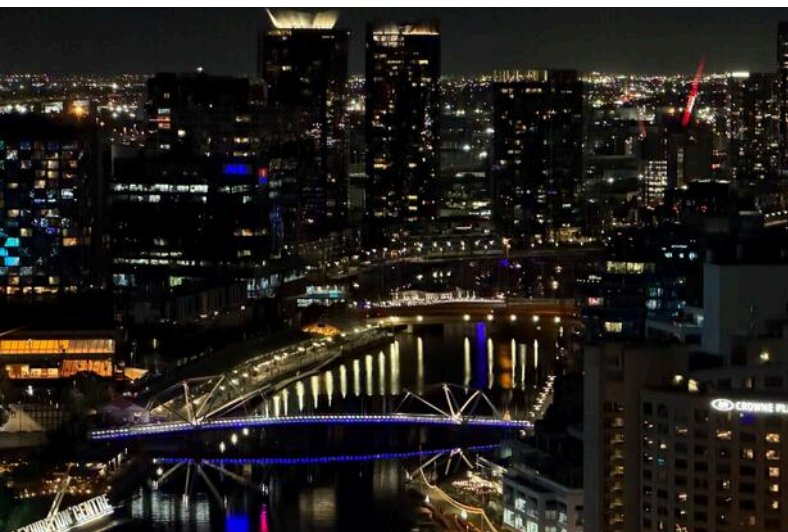
 15 °C

Altitude

85 ft

Video







## Melbourne or London ?

 December 3, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

The first light reveals the tall glass buildings interspersed with much lower red, yellow and grey (and older) brickwork buildings which surprise across the skyline.

The river meanders through the centre, providing a play area for a variety of pleasure and leisure craft. Bridges strategically, or maybe randomly, placed to squeeze everyone through from North to South against those from South to North.

The early morning dustcart (the silent helper) makes light work of the leaves and yesterday's discarded cappuccino, latte, flat white, mocha, macchiato, espresso, americano, cortado, affogato, ristretto and lungo coffee cups; regular or decaff; with or without chocolate sprinkles; small, regular or large;

The first red-eye breaks the silence overhead.

The first siren chases the first speedster, who for some reason has to race to secure that first all-important, closest, parking spot even though the traffic light or sign says "no", or "slow".

The first bus gently carries those who either cannot speed or do not want to speed.

The people of multiple origins and cultures burst from the railway stations, bustling through the streets, dodging each other, going about their businesses to support the thriving economy.

The tourists of multiple origins and cultures get in their way, blocking the pavements in order to capture the all-important selfie against the background of an architectural mosaic; Churches, converted warehouses, parks, sporting venues, sculptures,

plaques commemorating those known only to ancestors and historians.

Sometimes sunshine, sometimes rain, but invariably a breeze cuts up and down the streets and across the roads.

Signs and banners hang from lampposts , announcing concerts and events; future, current, and past; sporting, theatrical, musical and cultural.

Trees and patches of grass provide a quiet space for a lunchtime sandwich or well-intentioned light caesar salad; or just a reading place.

By evening, Chinese, Thai, French, Italian, Other European, American, Australasian, Middle Eastern, Far Eastern; fast or gourmet; business or romantic; full fat or diet; large or even larger - all available to eat in or takeaway: your choice, at a price, service not always included, tax always added.

Later, at night, a kaleidoscope of neon colour dances across the reflective backdrop. Lights, beams and shapes saying “Merry Christmas”. Flashing signs saying “come on in”; eat, drink and be merry.

Then one by one they say goodnight leaving only the red warning lights for any approaching aircraft and the dimly lit window of the last latenight worker.

The last screech of the last train slowly cornering on the rusty railway track.

The last bus crawls into the garage and the driver walks home.

The last impatient car driver or motor cyclist , rushes to get home.

The last electric scooter (the silent assassin) narrowly avoids the last drunk or wayward who will not sleep tonight.

The first light reveals the tall glass buildings interspersed with much lower red, yellow

and grey (and older) brickwork buildings which will always surprise.

**Time**

5:45 am

**Clear night**



**Altitude**

85 ft



---

Day 12



## Brekkie at Saporito

 December 3, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

Brekkie is at a lovely little café called Saporito who do a lovely Spanish omelette. On the way we spot a weird looking building.

**Time**

9:15 am

**Clear day**

 19 °C

**Altitude**

66 ft

Day 12



# National Gallery of Victoria

 December 3, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

We spend a large part of the morning in the NGV, admiring the artwork and enjoying the air conditioning.



Send your captions on a postcard, please, to....., [Don]



Fiona Smith 🤔 keep them clean! 🤔🤔



Graham Smith It's meant to be a "thumbs up". Maybe I misjudged the angle of the photo

Time

11:39 am

Clear day

 24 °C

Altitude

82 ft

Video



Day 12



# Riverside

 December 3, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

We walk down by the riverside where we observe the 'busy' construction workers standing around on the opposite bank Nothing changes.

Time

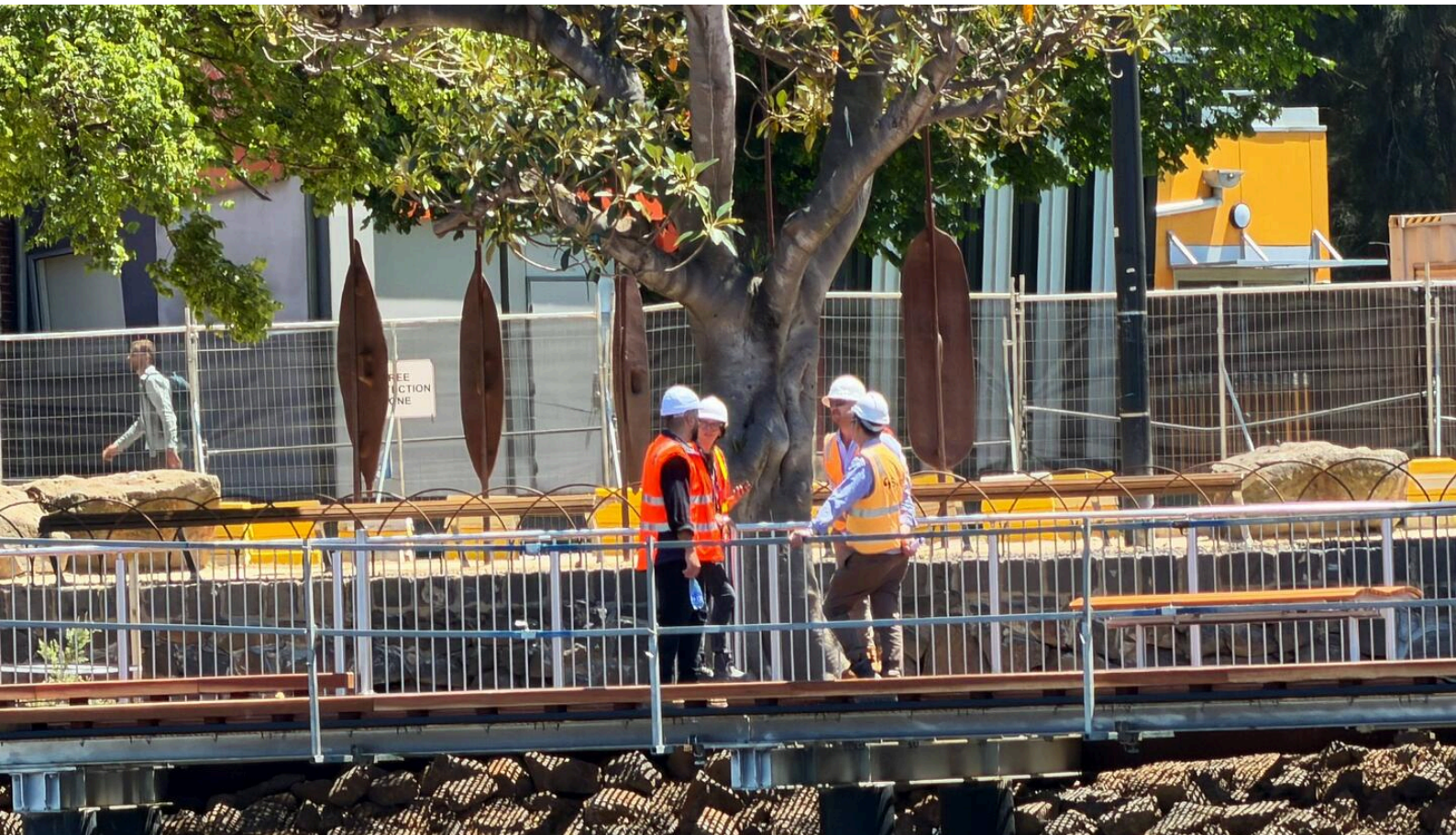
12:00 pm

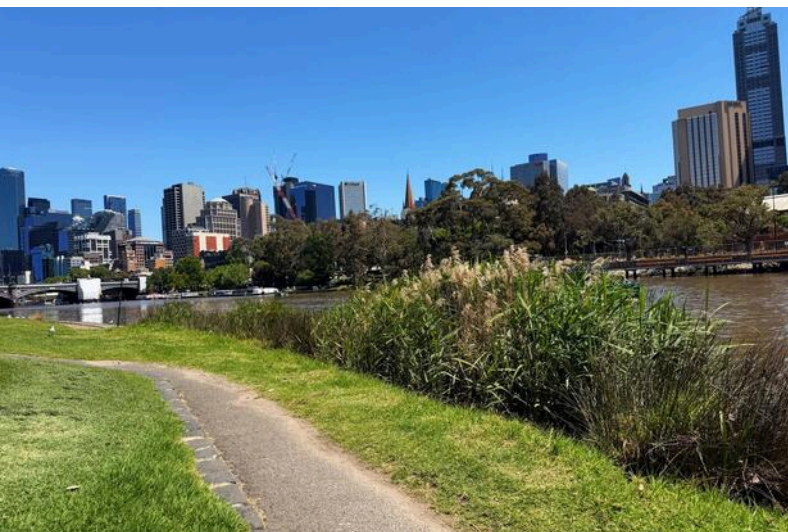
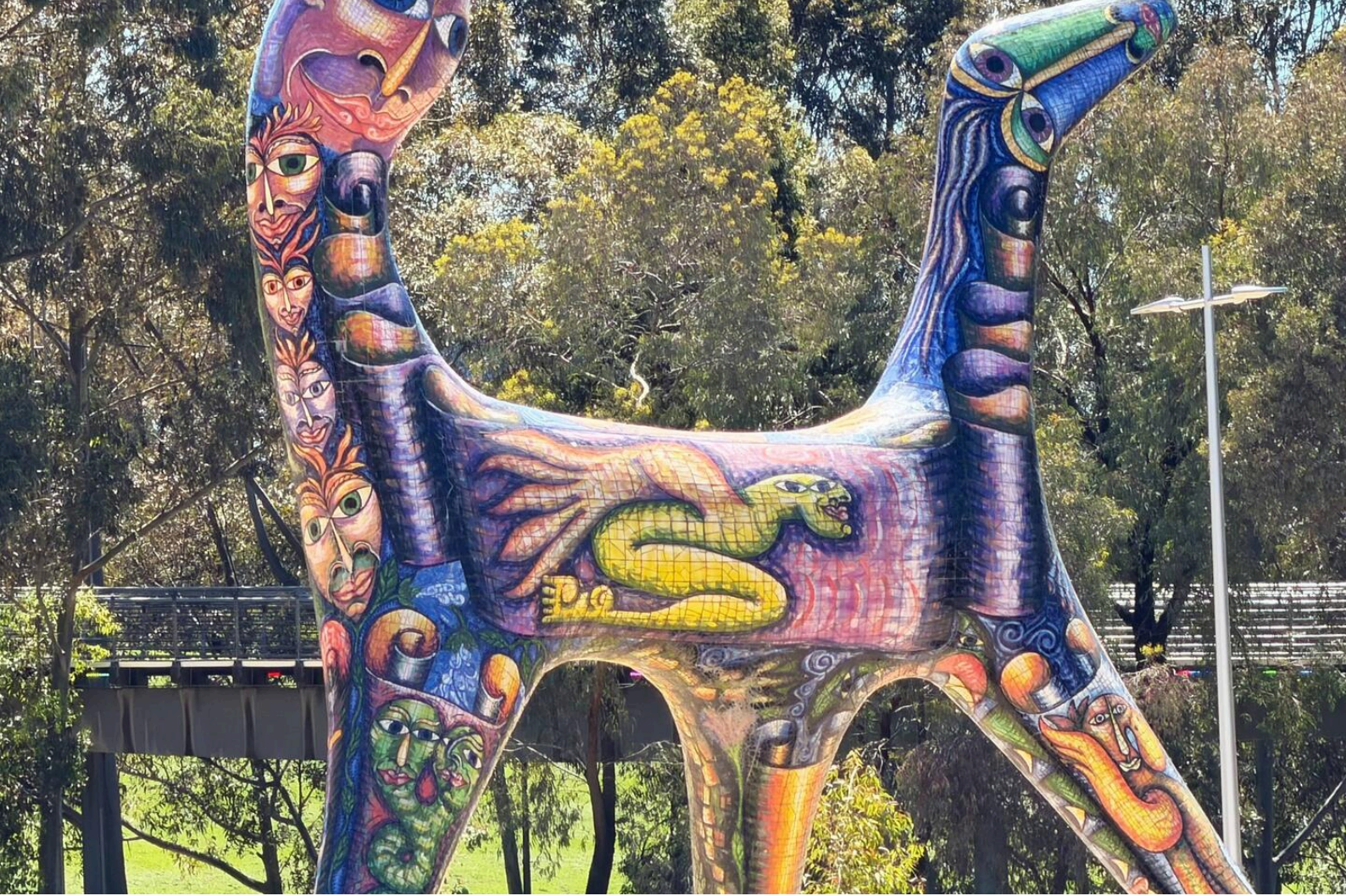
Clear day

 25 °C

Altitude

20 ft





Day 12



## Round The Block again

 December 3, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

On the way to our rendezvous with Scott and Dawn, we go round The Block arcade again and stop for a cold coffee.

Spotting the entrance to an interesting looking pub 🍺

Time

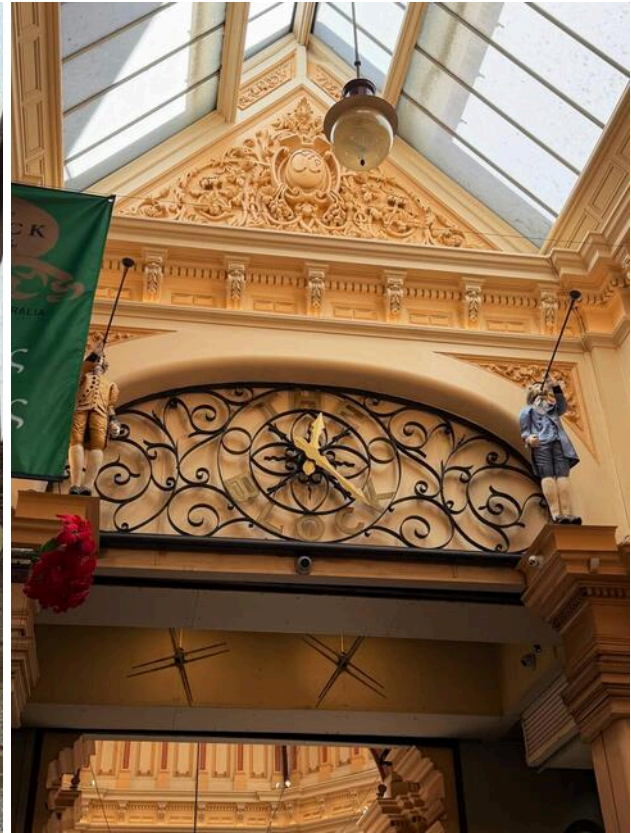
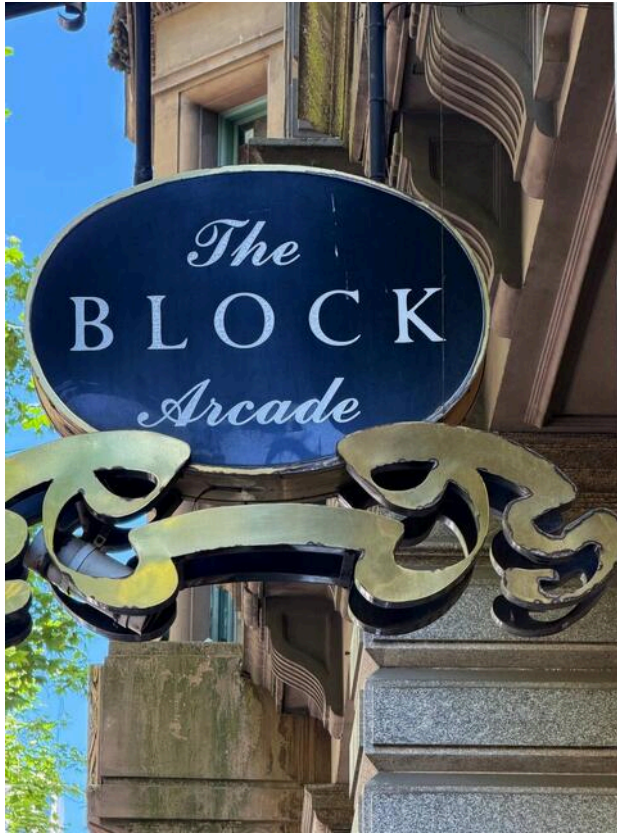
12:23 pm

Clear day

 25 °C

Altitude

92 ft





 The  
Charles Dickens  
Tavern

OPEN 7 DAYS  
Mon-Sat 11am - till late Sun 11:30 am - till late  
Free WIFI

Football / sports coverage LIVE and replay



## Walkabout

 December 3, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

Scott and Dawn have selected a guided tour around the Central Business District as their chosen team activity. Rita, our guide for the day, and being born and raised in Melbourne, is most knowledgeable and the facts and figures flow easily,

The tour demonstrates the breadth of cultural variety in Melbourne with historical anecdotes and different foods to be sampled along the way.

A team photo in front of a Christmas Tree in a beautiful old bank seems an appropriate way to mark the tour.

**Time**

3:48 pm

**Clear day**

 30 °C

**Altitude**

256 ft





## Fables

 December 3, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

After the tour, Graham has organised a reservation at a rooftop bar.


With high expectations we venture up to Fables only to be disappointed by the lack of suitable drinks and service.

One drink is more than enough before we decamp to a different establishment nearer to the river.

**Time**

5:42 pm

**Clear day**

 31 °C

**Altitude**

148 ft

Day 12



# Riverside

 December 3, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

We walk down, nearer to where we are staying and find a bar with a great table overlooking the city.

We have views of the Melbourne Cricket Ground and, to the other side, a perfect view of the sunset.

Not wishing to move again, this also serves as our place for dinner.

**Time**

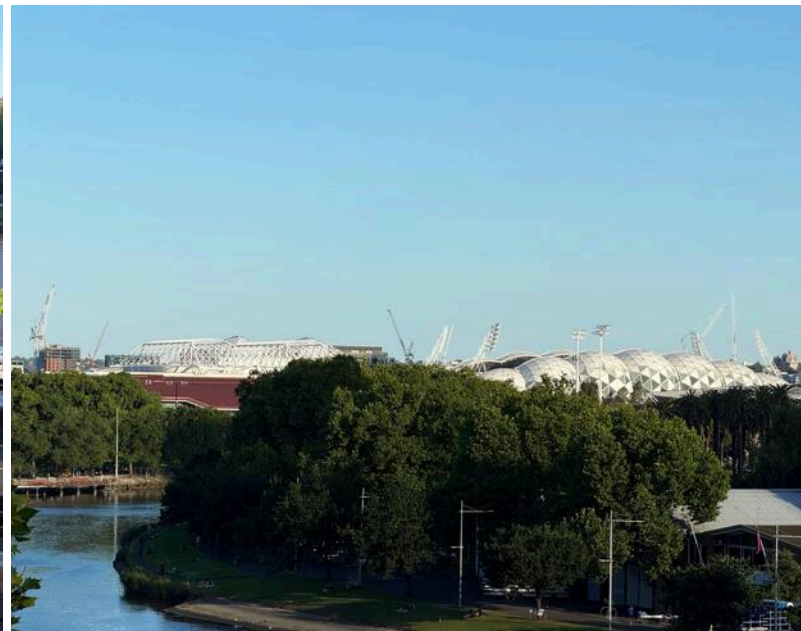
6:53 pm

**Clear day**

 30 °C

**Altitude**

36 ft



Day 12



# Lights

 December 3, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

On the walk home we experience another fantastic light show before retiring for the night.



Perhaps I could have one of these for my back yard? 🤔👍 [Don]



Graham Smith Quite impressive

**Time**

10:00 pm

**Clear night**

 24 °C

**Altitude**

46 ft

**Video**





Day 13



# Ormond College

 December 4, 2025 in Australia, Ormond College Main Building

Graham's great uncle was at Ormond College back in the 1950s

A beautiful building.

Time

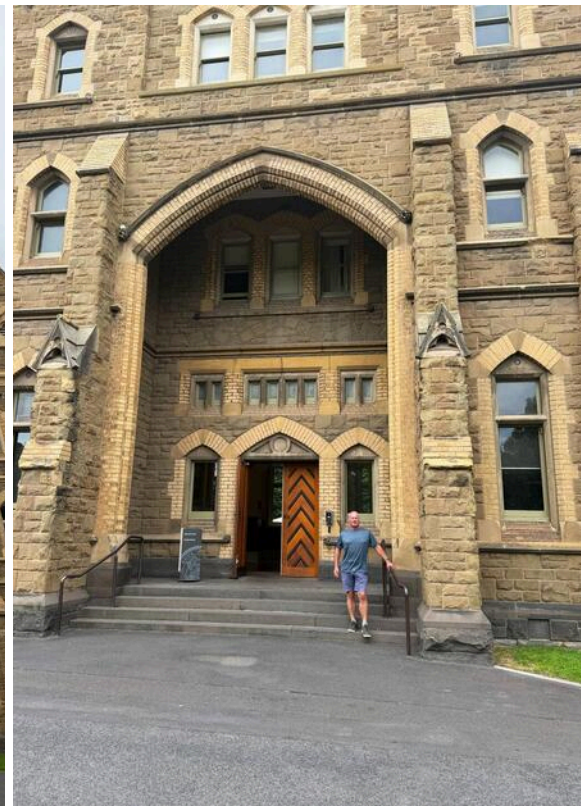
9:39 am

Partly cloudy

 25 °C

Altitude

151 ft







Day 13



# River Lunch

 December 4, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne


Fee's choice of team event is lunch on a river boat.

We arrive in time for boarding just before 1pm.

The food and service are top class.

Paddington is on a roll



 Showing off again 😊😊 [Don]

Time

12:31 pm

Partly cloudy

 29 °C

Altitude

43 ft









Day 13



## Afternoon sunshine

 December 4, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

After the river lunch, we stop off under the bridge at Ponyfish Island to enjoy the afternoon sun.

Paddington draws a bit of attention and we end up chatting to a group next to us, one of whom is from Adelaide where Scott and Dawns will be heading after Melbourne.



 Could this be Paddington's holiday romance 🤔. [Don]

**Time**

3:25 pm

**Windy**

 34 °C

**Altitude**

30 ft







## Another Disaster

 December 4, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

The team say they are hungry however no suggestions are forthcoming so Graham is asked to choose somewhere for a bite to eat.

Graham selects the nearby Crinitis which looks reasonable.

Unfortunately Scott and Dawn's food comes much later than Graham and Fee's. This causes a certain amount of consternation, however a 15% discount was applied to the bill, so all is not lost.

As a consequence Graham will not be making any further suggestions for refreshments as this is the second time his suggestions have proven to be suboptimal



**Time**

5:44 pm

**Partly cloudy**

 34 °C

**Altitude**

69 ft



## Polly Woodside

 December 4, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

In the evening, Graham and Fee go for a walk along the Southbank where they come across the Polly Woodside.

Built in Belfast in 1885, the three-masted cargo vessel was built to carry coal and nitrate between England and South America, sailing around the Cape Horn 16 times.

The ship took around six months to build and was made from iron, which had become the favoured material for ship builders since the 1830s.

The Barque was built for the W.J. Woodside Co. owned by William Woodside a 'dynamic entrepreneur' and was named after his wife Marian (Polly).

Sailing ships had ruled the seas and the transition to steam meant faster and more reliable travel. When the trade in coal/nitrate diminished the Polly Woodside discharged cargoes wherever they could be found. The ship was sold in 1904 and renamed Rona, eventually converted into a coal hulk to refuel steam ships in the Port of Melbourne.

**Time**

7:44 pm

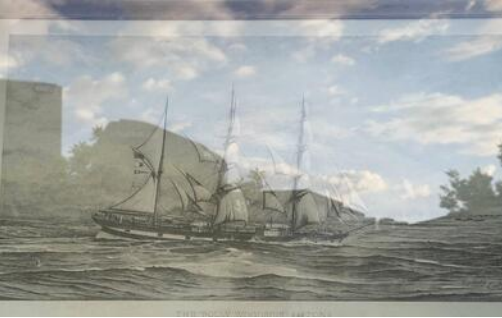
**Cloudy**

 20 °C

**Altitude**

26 ft






Day 14




# Early start

 December 5, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

Early start this morning. Graham and Fee have decided to grace the Australian Golf Open with their presence today. A half hour Uber ride down to the Royal Melbourne Golf Club does the trick

 Did Graham's wild card invitation get lost in the post 😊😅😅 [Don]

 Graham Smith It was a wild card, as wild as my shots 🏌️

Time

8:48 am

Cloudy

 16 °C

Altitude

95 ft

TICKETEK

05 DEC 2025, 06:30  
Crown Australian Open



THE ROYAL MELBOURNE

SECTION  
GA

ROW/SEAT



23712542272062





Day 14



# Lord of the Flies

 December 5, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

We follow scottish golfer Cameron Adam for a few holes. He, like everybody else, is pestered by the flies.

He should be used to it with all those pesky midges back home.

Time

11:43 am

Cloudy

 18 °C

Altitude

89 ft

Video





Day 14



# Roaring Rory

 December 5, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

Big roar for Rory. Or maybe not. Good job we saw him today because we're not sure he'll be here tomorrow the way he's playing 🤔

While waiting for Rory to miss his putt an Australian lady behind strikes up a conversation with Graham.

"Oh" she says "my family is from Edinburgh in Scotland, I'm Heather MacDonald"

That narrows it down a bit, thinks Graham.

Time

12:21 pm

Cloudy

 18 °C

Altitude

89 ft

Video






# Elvis

 December 5, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

Elvis is on the green. Elvis Smylie that is. Let's hope he's still smiling at the end

 Fiona Smith Elvis has left the green!

**Time**  
12:25 pm

**Cloudy**  
 18 °C

**Altitude**  
89 ft



Day 14



# Whoop Whoop

 December 5, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

Beer break




Fiona Smith Japanese chicken if anyone is wondering!

Time

12:58 pm

Cloudy

 19 °C

Altitude

82 ft





Day 14



# Train to Flinders


 December 5, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

Rather than getting another Uber, we catch the shuttle bus to Cheltenham and then the local train to Flinders Street with various stops along the way.

Time

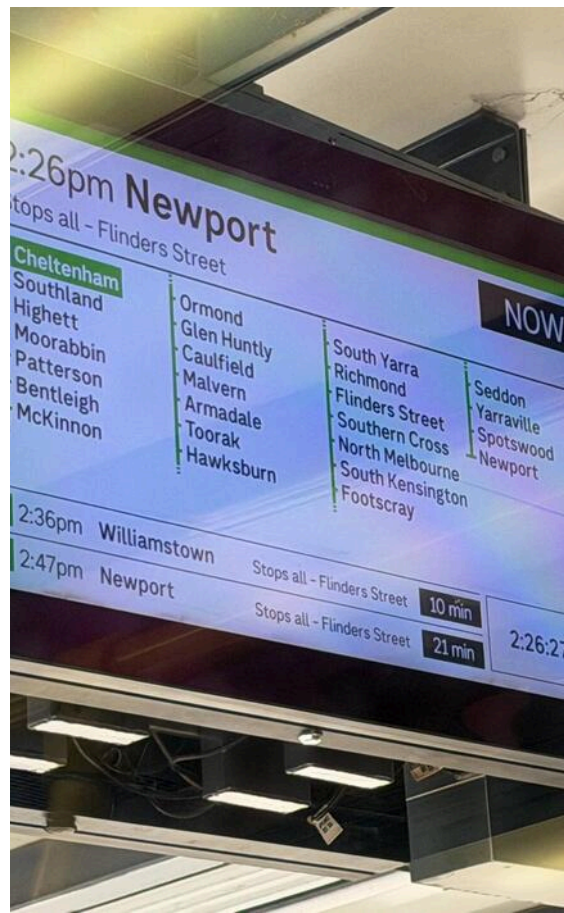
2:25 pm

Cloudy

 21 °C

Altitude

141 ft



---

Day 14



## Eureka 88

 December 5, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

Can't leave Melbourne without a frozen Margarita up on the Skydeck floor 88

Think it's called raising the bar? 🤔

**Time**

3:23 pm

**Clear day**

 25 °C

**Altitude**

43 ft









## The last supper

 December 5, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

For our last meal with Scott and Dawn in Melbourne, Fee is trusted with choosing the restaurant.

Fee chooses Asado which is Argentinian. Nobody is vegetarian so all good as it's heavily geared towards steak etc 👍

We arrive at the restaurant and Fee goes to announce our arrival. Armed with her reservation on the phone Fiona asks to be taken to the table.

An embarrassed lady cannot find the reservation on the system.

After a little examination of Fiona's phone, it is realised that we do indeed have a reservation for Asado

... but it is the Asado in London 🤔

The staff are amazing. We are taken to a great table outside.

The food is delicious and we have a fantastic evening.

A gentle stroll back along the Southbank to the apartment as we all have an early start tomorrow, heading off in different directions.



Fiona Smith Not quite sure how I managed to book the table in London, I'm sure I was on the Melbourne site! 🤔



**Time**

6:35 pm

**Partly cloudy**

 23 °C

**Altitude**

112 ft



## Out of time

 December 6, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

Graham double checks the travel plans for today and discovers something a bit weird about Australian Time Zones:

In Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory the time of day always stays the same. Therefore, during the Australian summer, a puzzling situation is created: Sydney is an hour ahead of Brisbane, even though Brisbane is geographically further east !

Not being aware of this means that some of the timings of the later parts of our adventures may not be as we expected.

Anyway, at least for this morning, we have a two hour flight leaving at 11:40am from Melbourne to Ballina Byron which are both in the same timezone.

Then we have a two hour drive into Queensland, to Cedar Grove, to visit family (Stuart and Derani) where we gain an hour. So we will arrive an hour before we said we would.



Fiona Smith I'm feeling a bit confused 😊 with the time zones. Not expected! 😊

**Time**

6:54 am

**Cloudy**

 13 °C

**Altitude**

85 ft

Edit



# World Clock

Yesterday, -11HRS

London

22:28

Today, +0HRS

Sydney

09:28

Today, +0HRS

Melbourne

09:28

Today, -1HR

Brisbane

08:28



World Clock



Alarms



Stopwatch



Timers



## Melbourne Airport

 December 6, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne


We say farewell to Scott and Dawn before our taxi gets us to the airport in good time. We can check in our bags from 9:40 so plenty time for a bite to eat and a coffee first.

It's raining outside. A good time to be moving on.

**Time**

9:07 am

**Cloudy**

 16 °C

**Altitude**

367 ft



## Knife Lady and Manicure Lady

 December 6, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

Baggage checking is a challenge but not as big a challenge as going through security.

The lady in front of us gets her bag pulled and searched.

Inside they find a knife, a knife 🤯

You'd think she'd know better but there's always one 🤪

But no, not today, today there are two !

The next lady also gets her bagged pulled and searched.

Inside they find a pair of scissors, yes scissors 🤯

That would be Fee's fully tooled up manicure set 🤪🤪🤪



Fiona Smith Oops! I forgot I had put my manicure set in my gadget bag! 🤪🤪🤪

**Time**

9:58 am

**Cloudy**

 17 °C

**Altitude**

371 ft

Day 15



## Slight delay

 December 6, 2025 in Australia, Melbourne

Slight delay but we are on board JQ464 and good to go.

Pole position, seats 1A and 1B

**Time**

12:07 pm

**Cloudy**

 18 °C

**Altitude**

338 ft



## Running late

 December 6, 2025 in Australia, Ballina


The plane is about an hour and a half late getting into Ballina but, with the hour difference, we will arrive at Stuart and Derani's about the time we told them to expect us.

The car is a good size, automatic, and they drive on the correct side of the road.

**Time**

1:48 pm

**Windy**

 30 °C

**Altitude**

16 ft



# Ballina Byron Gateway Airport

HELP HEAD TO  
T.COM.AU

No Entry

No Entry

No Entry

Day 15



# Cedar Grove

 December 6, 2025 in Australia, Logan City

On arrival, we sit outside and admire the garden, filled with eucalyptus trees, bottle trees etc and a plethora of birds and ducks.

Time

6:06 pm

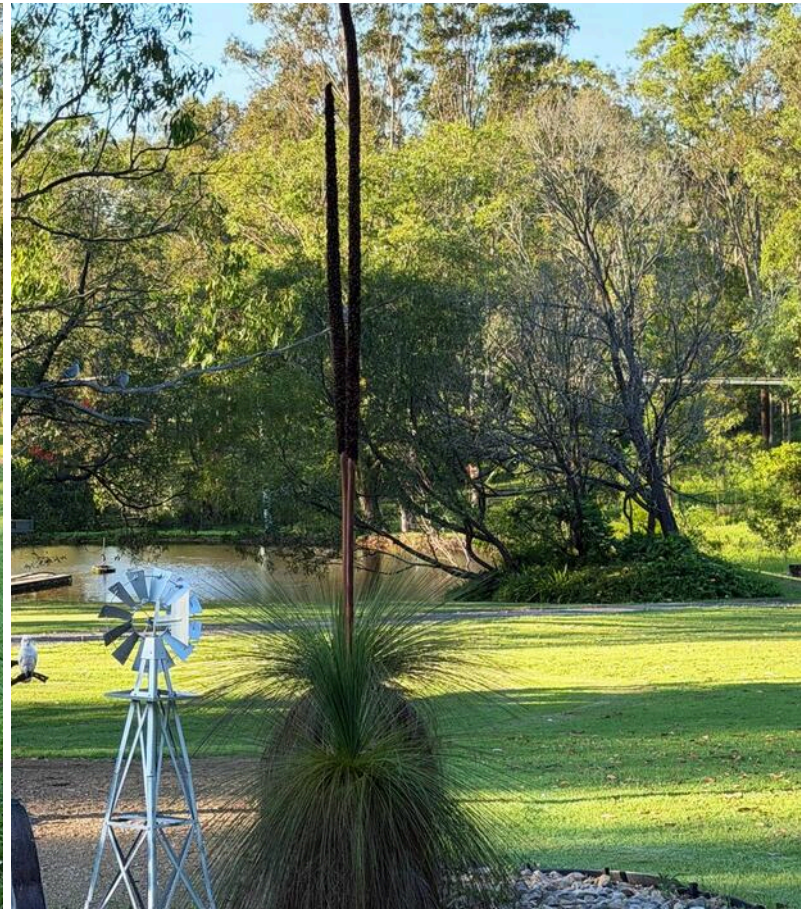
Clear day

 26 °C

Altitude

161 ft

Video





Day 15



# Kangaroos

 December 6, 2025 in Australia, Logan City

Whilst enjoying a cold beer outside we spot some kangaroos at the bottom of the garden

Time

7:32 pm

Clear night



Altitude

148 ft

Video





Day 16



# Birdsong

 December 7, 2025 in Australia, Logan City

We wake up to wonderful birdsong and a sunny morning.

It's an early start because we are going up to the mountains.

But first we say hello to the roos in the garden.

Time

7:20 am

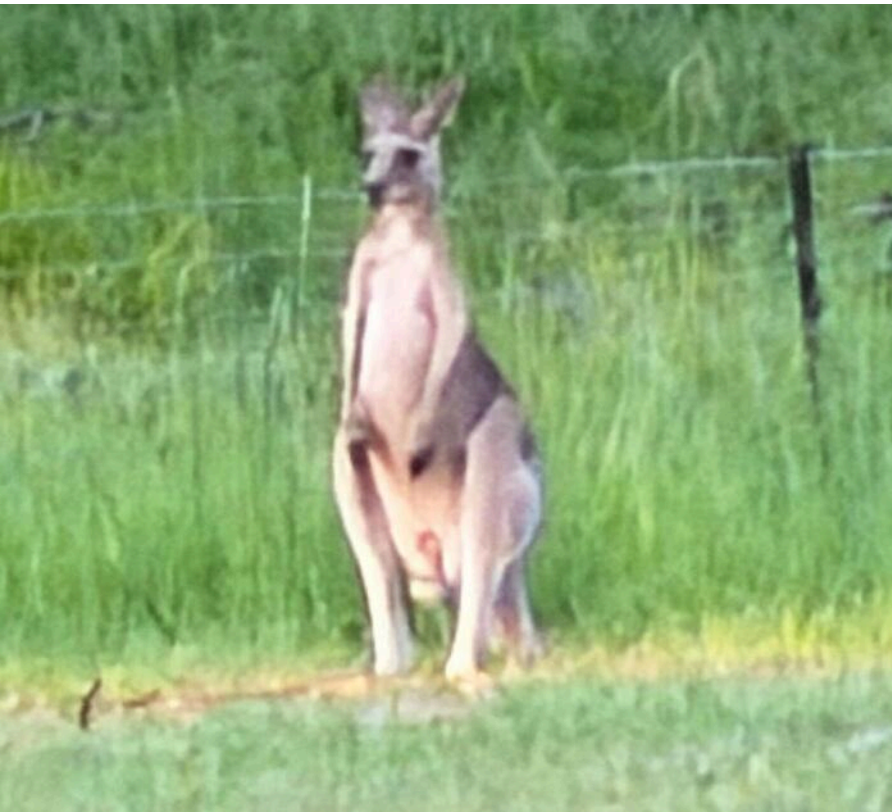
Cloudy

 24 °C

Altitude

161 ft

Video





Day 16



# Canungra

 December 7, 2025 in Australia, Scenic Rim Regional

We head off to Lamington park with warning signs at the side of the road, stopping for a cup of tea on the way

Time

8:27 am

Cloudy

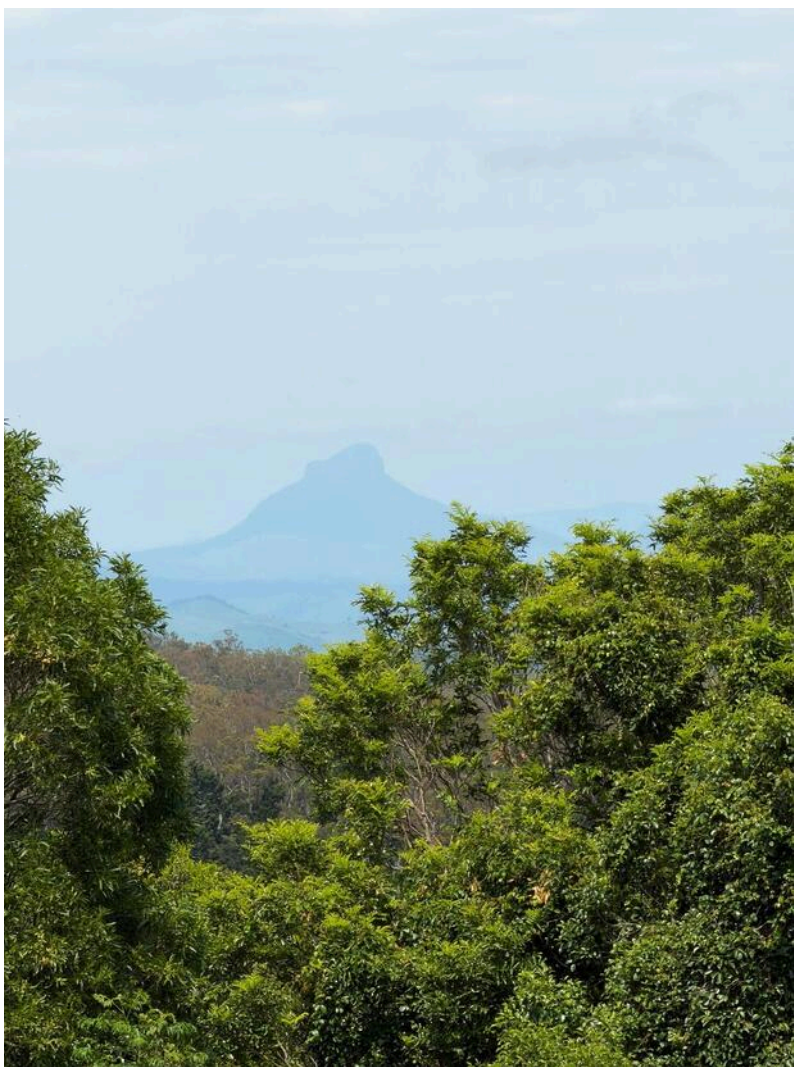
 24 °C

Altitude

276 ft









# Trees

 December 7, 2025 in Australia, Scenic Rim Regional

The trees along the way are amazing.

Fig Stranglers which take over existing trees, leaving them hollow.

Stag Horns which grow in the branches and crow's nests which also do this.

Time

10:23 am

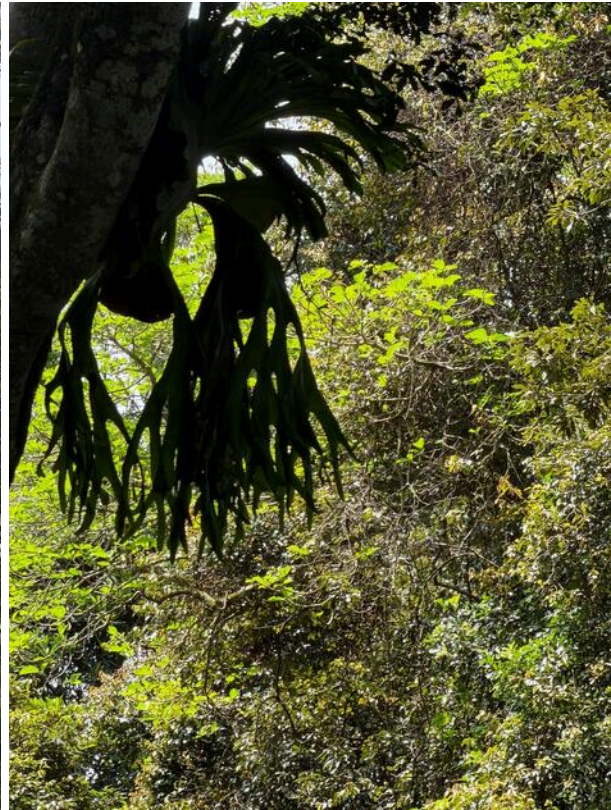
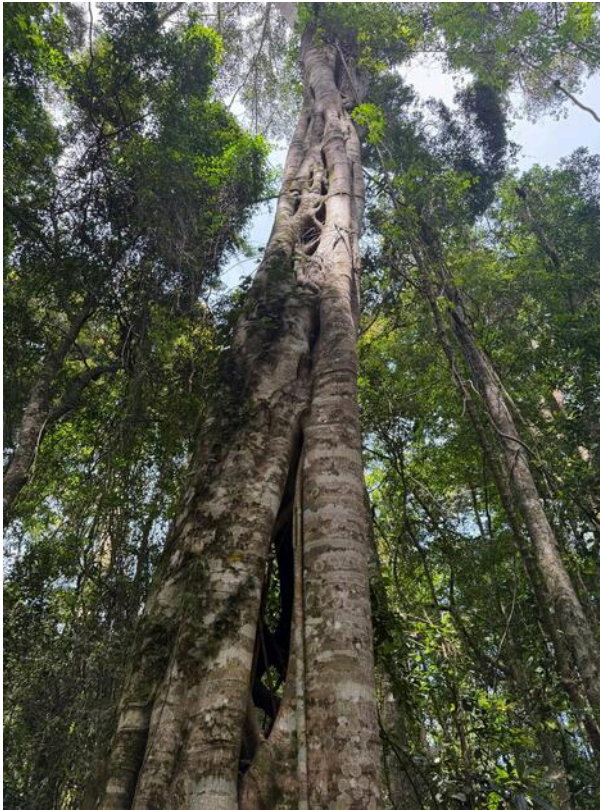
Partly cloudy



25 °C

Altitude

2,618 ft







## O'Reillys

 December 7, 2025 in Australia, Scenic Rim Regional

We reach O'Reillys at the top of the mountain. Stuart is an expert tour guide and we are not short of information.

The bird life is just amazing.

**Time**

10:44 am

**Partly cloudy**

 23 °C

**Altitude**

2,999 ft

**Video**















# Airplane Crash

 December 7, 2025 in Australia, Green Mountains

There is a whole story around and airplane crash and how the survivors were rescued.

**Time**

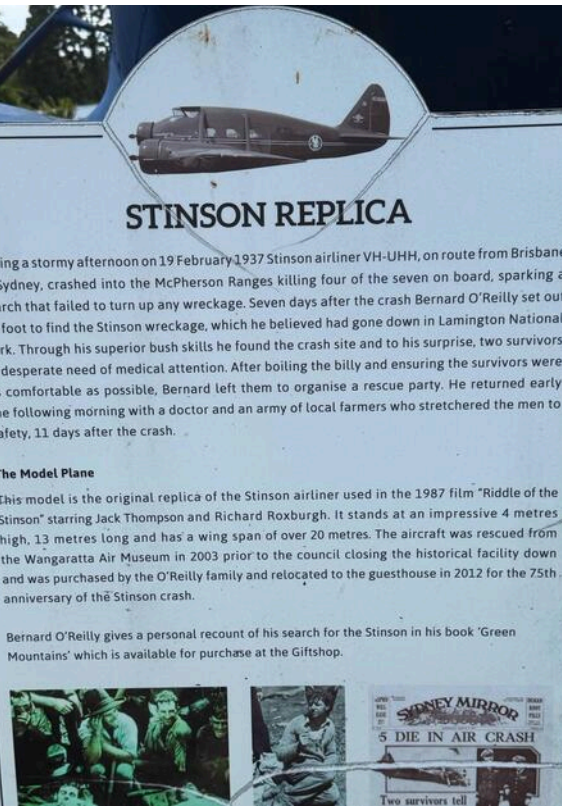
12:38 pm

**Partly cloudy**

 26 °C

**Altitude**

2,976 ft







## Satin Bowerbird

 December 7, 2025 in Australia, Green Mountains


The Satin Bowerbird is weird.

To attract a mate, it builds a u shape out of twigs and then tosses anything blue it can find (especially plastic bottle caps) through the gap. The female is expected to get all excited about this.

**Time**

1:55 pm

**Clear day**

 26 °C

**Altitude**

2,976 ft



Day 16



# Wallabies

 December 7, 2025 in Australia, Scenic Rim Regional

On the way back a shingleback skink crosses the road in front of us and then we spot some wallabies at the side of the road.

One has a joey in her pouch.

Wallabies are a bit smaller than Kangaroos. Their tails are longer and they use them for sitting. Kangaroos sit on their bottoms on the ground, Wallabies sit on their tails.

Time

2:24 pm

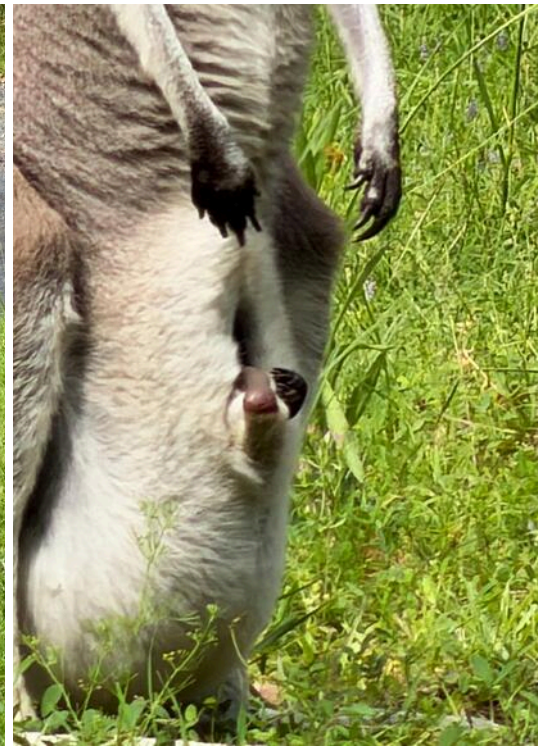
Cloudy

 31 °C

Altitude

1,027 ft

Video







## Moving on

 December 8, 2025 in Australia, Logan City

Last night there was a pretty big thunderstorm. Certainly flashier and louder than we have experienced in the UK for many a year.

This morning the sun has returned and it's time for moving on.

Stuart and Derani have been amazing hosts. Stuart as acting tour guide knows everything you need to know and Derani's cooking is exceptional.

It's been great catching up on family stories and history.

**Time**

7:54 am

**Cloudy**

 22 °C

**Altitude**

161 ft

Day 17



# Byron Bay

 December 8, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

The drive down to Byron Bay is seamless and the drop off point for the rental car is a two minute walk from the guesthouse, perfect.

We have lost the hour we gained on Saturday but will get it back again when we go up to Brisbane at the weekend

All this jet lag

**Time**

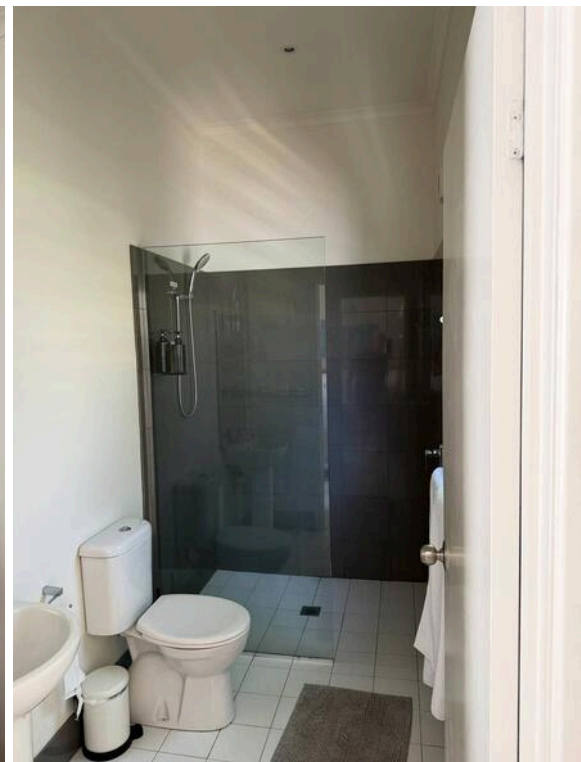
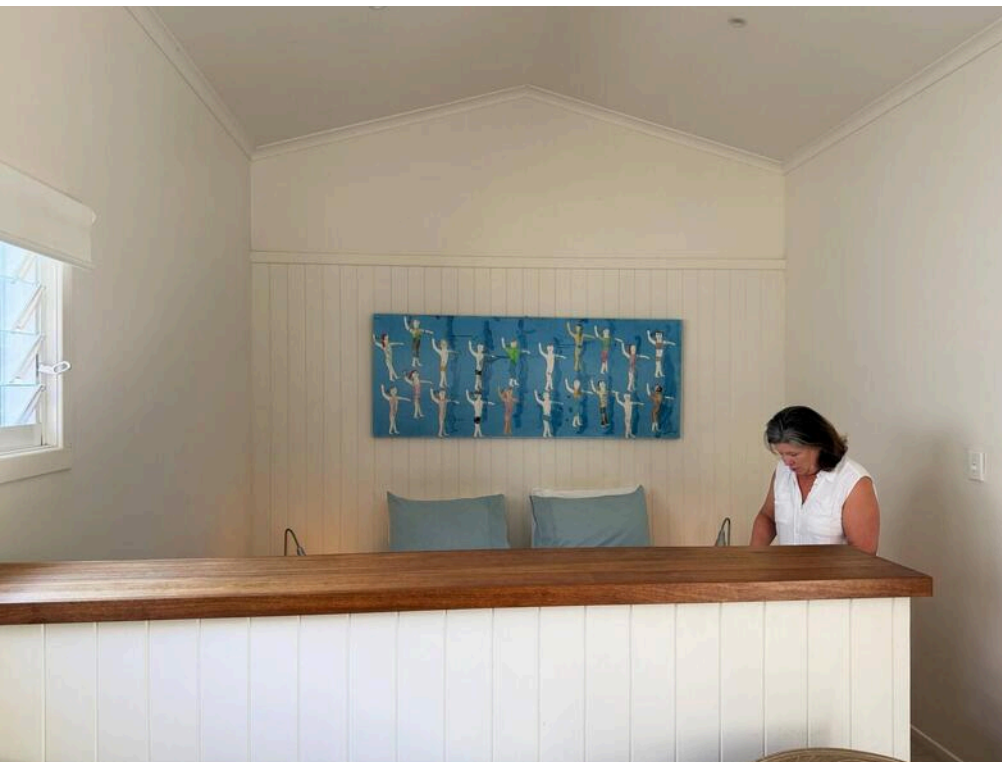
2:25 pm

**Clear day**

 26 °C

**Altitude**

33 ft





Day 17



# Cricket and Beach

 December 8, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

Grabbing a bite to eat. Catch up on the cricket on the telly and beach in the background.

Time for a Great Northern at the Beachie (Beach Hotel)

**Time**

3:18 pm

**Clear day**

 25 °C

**Altitude**

30 ft






Day 17



# Life's a Beach

 December 8, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

A walk by the sea to see what's in store for this week

 I defy anyone who sees the map not to say in their head.... "Or not Toowoomba that is the question!" [Geoff]

**Time**  
5:11 pm

**Clear day**  
 26 °C

**Altitude**  
30 ft





Day 17



# The Mez Club

 December 8, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

Dinner in the Mez Club on our first night in Byron Bay.

Middle Eastern food and a lovely atmosphere.

When Graham goes to pay the bill, the lady warns Graham that, if he is thinking of swimming in the sea, he needs to be aware that there are sharks in the area at the moment 🦈

Graham has to decide whether or not to tell Fee. Maybe wait and see if she ventures towards the water tomorrow.

**Time**

9:00 pm

**Clear night**



**Altitude**

36 ft





Day 17



# Schoolies and Hatches

 December 8, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

We stop into the Railway Friendly Bar for a nightcap where there is a Western musician on his guitar before it's time to call it a night.

The place is full of Schoolies who have travelled to Byron Bay after their exams to unwind and go off the rails.

A bit wild but it brings a vibe to the area.

Before they close the bar, they close the main door into the bar and leave open the beer hatches for the last 20 mins or so

Time

10:21 pm

Clear night



Altitude

36 ft





Day 18



# Breakfast in Byron

 December 9, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

A beautiful morning for breakfast.

Today will most likely be spent lazing around the pool and the beach, soaking up the rays.

**Time**

8:48 am

**Clear day**

 25 °C

**Altitude**

30 ft





Day 18



# Chill out on the beach

 December 9, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

Today is for just chillin' on the beach 😎



Fiona Smith The water is very warm

Time

10:45 am

Clear day

 25 °C

Altitude

36 ft

Video





Day 18



# Mexican at Miss Margarita

 December 9, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

Nachos for lunch.

Graham has a Pacifico

Fee has a Captain Sensible

**Time**

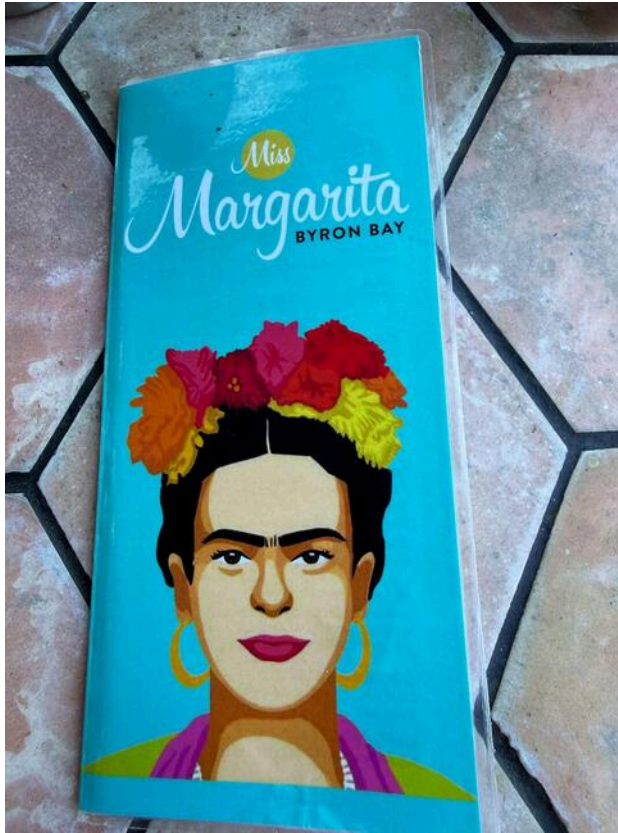
1:02 pm

**Clear day**

 26 °C

**Altitude**

36 ft





Cervecería del Pacífico, S. de R.L.

CERVEZA  
**PACIFICO**  
MAZATLÁN · SINALOA

CLARA



Cont. Neto:  
**355** ml



## Ember

 December 9, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

After a day in the sun we enjoy dinner in the Ember Steak House. Instead of steak, we both have a Portuguese style chicken. The glazed carrots which accompany are delicious, as is the side dish of pasta with cheese (their equivalent of mac 'n cheese).

As seems to be the case in Byron Bay, the service is fabulous with friendly staff.

They have definitely not been trained in the French style 😊

There is a table of 14 which definitely looks like a work do.

People are beginning to appear wearing Christmas hats, which is a bit weird considering how hot and sunny it is - we are on our Summer Holidays.

**Time**

6:39 pm

**Clear day**

 26 °C

**Altitude**

30 ft



Day 18



# Light Years away

 December 9, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

On the way back to the apartment we stop of at Light Years for a nightcap.

Light Years is a Japanese style restaurant with friendly staff and a comfortable bar.

Time

9:01 pm

Clear night



Altitude

36 ft





**LIGHT YEARS**

**ASIAN BAR & DINER**



## History

 December 10, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

Byron Bay was named after Cape Byron, which Captain James Cook named in 1770 to honor John Byron, a British explorer who circumnavigated the world, and grandfather of the famous poet Lord Byron.

Although named a Bay when discovered, it is in fact in geological terms a "Bight" as the angle of curvature from Cape Byron to Hastings point is less than 25 degrees.

Cape Byron, a headland adjacent to the town, is the easternmost point of mainland Australia.

The local Arakwal Aboriginal people's name for the area is Cavvanbah, meaning "meeting place".

**Time**

6:30 am

**Clear day**

 23 °C

**Altitude**

33 ft

Day 19



# Dragon

 December 10, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

This little fella joins us for breakfast



Fiona Smith He is very sweet, doesn't say much though....

**Time**

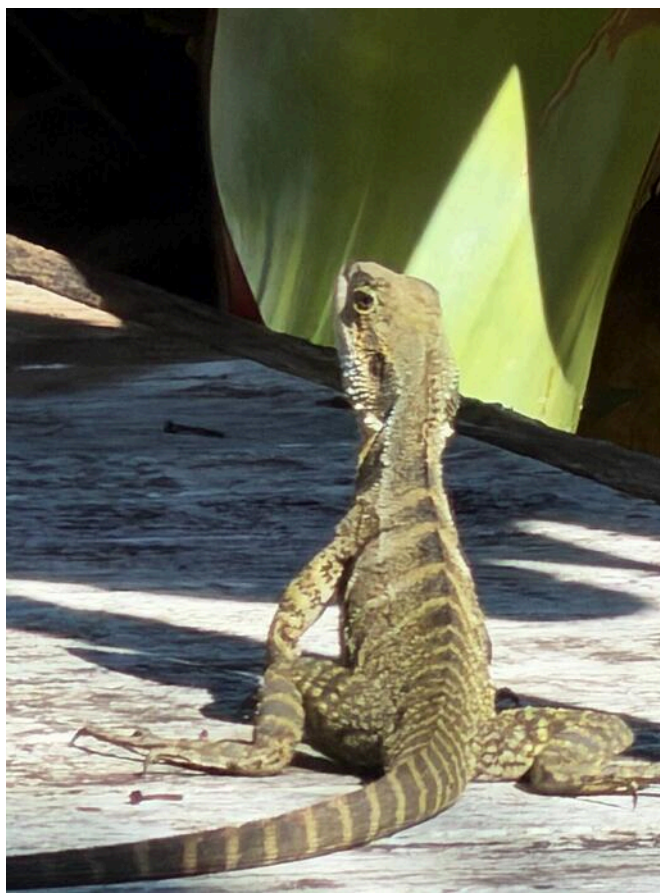
9:11 am

**Clear day**

 26 °C

**Altitude**

30 ft





## Uber challenges

 December 10, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

Today is another day for relaxing in Byron Bay.

The Treehouse on Belongil has live music and looks a likely place for dinner tonight. Graham decides to walk up there just to see what it's like.

It's very hot and a 20 minute walk from the main beach area.

Graham orders an Uber to take him back. It turns out there is a major traffic problem on the road into the Bay. The Uber is nine minutes away for about 30 minutes until the driver abandons the booking.

A second driver picks up the booking and is 10 minutes away, from a different direction.

Graham has a beer.

When Graham gets into the taxi, the driver is only going to take him 2 minutes down the road to Main Beach. Apparently Main Beach is a place, not just the main beach in the town. This probably explains why the previous Uber abandoned Graham. No point sitting in traffic for a 2 minute ride 😂

Anyway, new Uber gets Graham back to where Fee is happily sunbathing on the beach.

It's only taken an hour and a half but the table is booked for tonight.

The Ubers will also be booked well in advance !



Fiona Smith I was wondering why Graham took so long, but I carried sunbathing and taking a dip in the ocean 🌊, very relaxing 😊

Time

12:11 pm

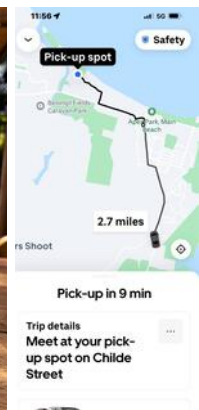
Clear day

☀️ 26 °C

Altitude

26 ft





Day 19



# White stick, Red stick

 December 10, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

Where we have lunch there is a protocol whereby: if everything is OK you have the White end of the stick upwards, if you need attention then you have the Red end up.

Time

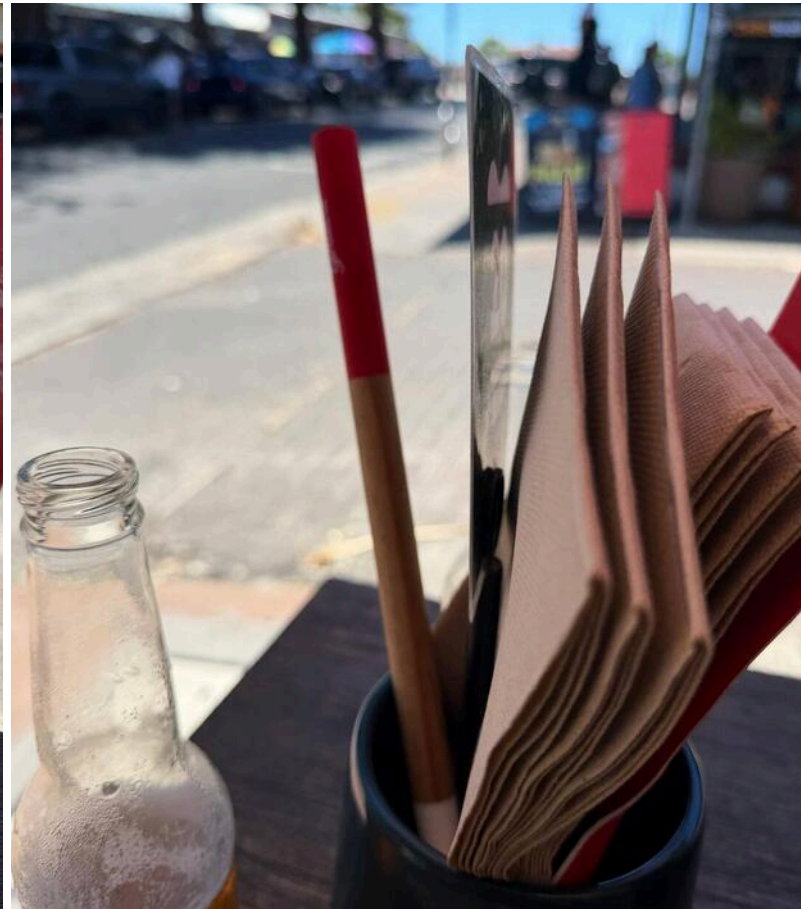
1:47 pm

Clear day

 27 °C

Altitude

36 ft





## Wally or Wendy ? and Benny ?

 December 10, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

The afternoon is spent around the pool, reading, listening to music and just floating in the pool.

We have a visit from our friend Wally the Water Dragon, or is it Wendy ? How do you tell with water dragons ?

Fee has been lying on a sunbed when she is sure that a dark snake abseils down from a nearby tree, landing amongst the dead palm fronds. Probably Benny, the Brown Tree Snake (*Boiga irregularis*). But, not wanting to investigate further, Fee makes a swift exit back to the room to get ready for the evening.



**Fiona Smith** It was definitely a snake. 🐍 his tail hung on the the palm tree and when his head reached the ground he let go and plopped to the ground. Lovely golden dark brown in colour, but I definitely wasn't hanging around to say hello!



**Fiona Smith** Wally or Wendy wasn't there the next morning for breakfast, maybe the tree snake 🐍 had a big dinner last night.



Sure that wasn't Monty [Don]



**Graham Smith** Monty Python ?



**Fiona Smith** Monty is in Clare Ville as a diamond python!

**Time**

3:04 pm

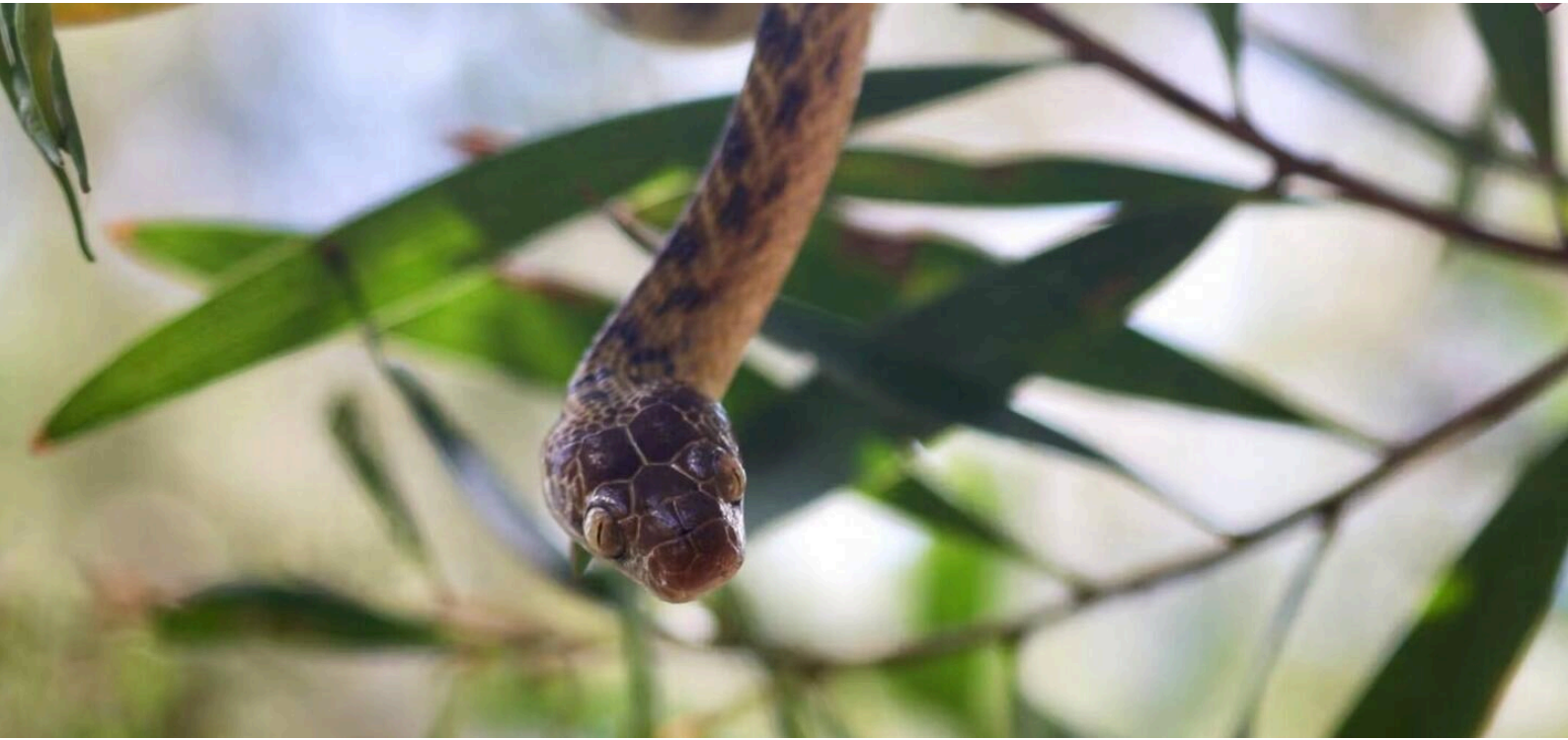
**Partly cloudy**

 29 °C

**Altitude**

30 ft





Day 19



# Treehouse

 December 10, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

During Graham's epic journey to the Treehouse earlier, he did manage to book a table for the evening and a well timed Uber gets Graham, Fee and Paddington there in time for the live acoustic music.

Pre- dinner drinks include a Holiday Margarita

Time

5:53 pm

Clear day

 25 °C

Altitude

26 ft

Video





**holiday margarita**

1800 coconut tequila, liquor 43 horchata, coconut cream, pineapple juice, coconut sugar

Day 19




# Clase Azul Reposado Tequila

 December 10, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

In the Pixie, there is a beautiful , expensive, Tequila bottle. If you loosen the silver cap, you can tap it like a bell.

We don't loosen the cap, but do have a small Pinot Noir before retiring for the night.

 Fiona Smith Love the bottle but not paying \$400 Aus dollars! 🤔

Time

9:15 pm

Partly cloudy

 23 °C

Altitude

36 ft






**PIXIE ITALIAN**

Day 20




# Lighthouse

 December 11, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

Today we rent e-bikes, and these are serious e-bikes. Next to no pedalling required even on steep hills. In fact, there is a mode which is actually illegal in NSW. If you accidentally hit that mode the advice is to make out you are still pedalling.

We cycle up to the Lighthouse which is the Eastern most point on the Australian mainland.



Fiona Smith No peddling up the hill the bike  propelled us there! 😄😄😄

**Time**

10:30 am

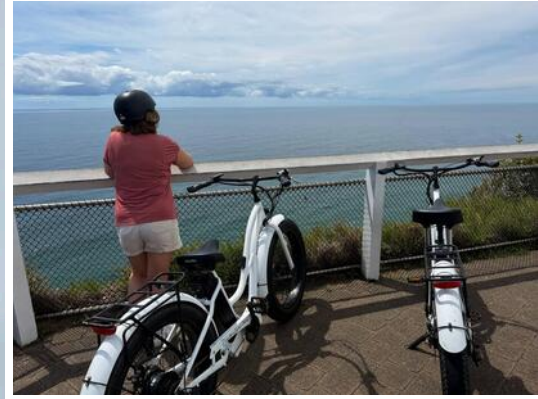
**Partly cloudy**

 24 °C

**Altitude**

262 ft







## Barnsley Boy

 December 11, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

On the way down we stop off at a viewpoint for Cosy Corner where the sharks have been hanging out. Tens of sharks and dolphins corralled a cloud of pilchards into the bay where they proceeded to feast on them - a kind of 'all you can eat' buffet,

There are none to be seen this morning although plenty of people are chancing it in the water of Tallow Beach.

A guy next to us drops his phone over the railings. Turns out he is from Barnsley, over here for the cricket - enough said 🤔

At least he manages to retrieve his phone without falling down the cliff.

**Time**

10:52 am

**Partly cloudy**

 24 °C

**Altitude**

236 ft





## Treehouse

 December 11, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

We cycle our Freedom Machines over to the Treehouse for a refreshing beverage.

They are preparing for a local food, drink and music Xmas party this afternoon, including a pop-up gin bar which starts to surround our bikes.

**Time**

11:52 am

**Cloudy**

 25 °C

**Altitude**

26 ft



**TREEHOUSE**

**LOCALS**

**XMAS**

**PARTY**

**THU 11 DEC \* FROM 4PM**

**CELEBRATING OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY**

**BROOKIE'S POP UP, LIVE MUSIC & DJS**

**TREE HOUSE**

*Brookie's*

BYRON DRY GIN



# Chihuahua

 December 11, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

On the way back, Graham's phone jumps out of the holder and lands on the road. Fortunately the damage is not terminal and all that is required is a new screen protector.

SOS Phone Repairs and Accessories come to the rescue after lunch at Chihuahua's cantina.



**Fiona Smith** The phone holder was made of rubber and quite bendy! Probably not the best phone holder but needed to know where to go.

**Time**

1:42 pm

**Cloudy**

 26 °C

**Altitude**

36 ft

## Did you know?...

- TEQUILA is made from only BLUE AGAVE
- MEZCAL is made from 28 different species of AGAVE
- MEZCAL is cooked in pits in the ground to give it its smokey flavour
- TEQUILA can only be produced in certain regions (JALISCO been the main State)
- TEQUILA SHOULD NOT have worms in the bottle
- TEQUILA IS GLUTEN-FREE



Day 20



# Hutong Harry's

 December 11, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

Hutong Harry's is a great Chinese restaurant down in the town. Once again, the staff are great and we have a lovely meal.

Time

6:49 pm

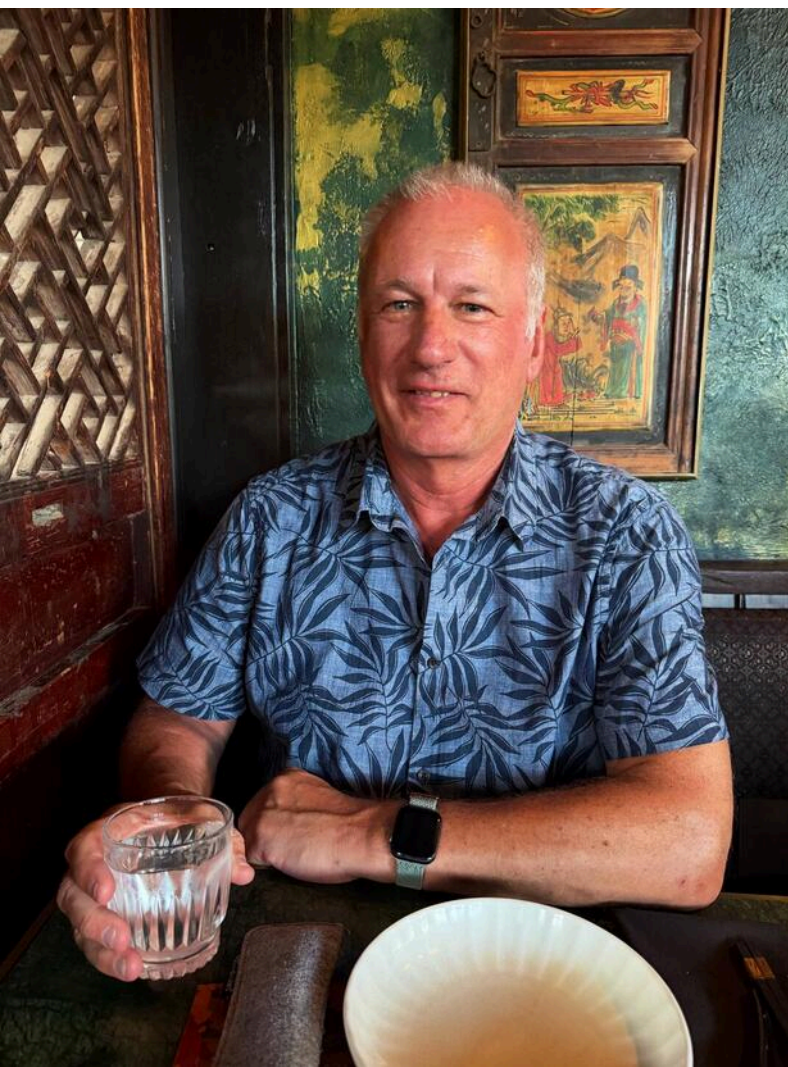
Partly cloudy

 24 °C

Altitude

30 ft






Day 20



# Railway Friendly

 December 11, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

There is live music over at the Railway Friendly Bar so we go over for an hour or so.

This will be our last late night out in Byron Bay. We get a special send off. More details available on request.

Time

9:11 pm

Cloudy

 23 °C

Altitude

46 ft

Video







## Squashing and Washing

 December 12, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

Graham has a load of washing that needs doing and we both fancy a massage. So we take the washing down to the laundrette where a lady very kindly offers to do the washing and drying while we go for a massage. Just 35 aussie dollars for the laundry (£17)

The massages are quite intense which is what we both need.

By the time the massages are finished, the washing is done - perfect.



**Fiona Smith** During the massage I could hear someone groaning in pain. They offered to stop at one point and refund him but they carried on and he kept groaning! At first I thought it might be Graham because I knew his back was sore. A relief to find out at the end of the session it wasn't him.

**Time**

10:30 am

**Cloudy**

 25 °C

**Altitude**

30 ft



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# North Byron

 December 12, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

In the afternoon we take the solar powered train up to North Byron and back. It's only a ten minute train ride up the track where there is a hotel.

Not really much to see there but it is yet another form of transport we have used on the trip.



Fiona Smith A lovely trip, short but sweet

Time

1:34 pm

Partly cloudy



Altitude

30 ft

Video







## Pixie food

 December 12, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

It's going to be an early night so we book a table at Pixie round the corner.

One thing we've noticed is that everyone eats early round here. Mostly between 5 and 7:30 pm. This suits us tonight.

One of the staff remembers us from the other night. Actually he remembers Paddington 🤔

Fee has Bolognese, Graham has Spaghetti with prawns and chilli.

Outside it starts to rain but more like drizzle.

**Time**

5:35 pm

**Cloudy**

 24 °C

**Altitude**

66 ft



# Yahtzee

 December 12, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

We have a fairly early start in the morning so we have a game of Yahtzee on the veranda.

Fee wins the first game convincingly, Graham wins the second game by just one point (verified by VAR). Graham wins the decider convincingly.

So Graham wins, but really only by a point



Fiona Smith My right eye starts to play up a bit so I use my sleep mask to cover it. Not sure I was reading the dice correctly but well done to Graham xx

**Time**

7:14 pm

**Rain**

 22 °C

**Altitude**

30 ft



# Greyhound

 December 13, 2025 in Australia, Byron Bay

Early start to catch the Greyhound to Brisbane.

A male brush turkey waves us goodbye. We know it's a male due to the bright yellow wattle which is used to attract the female of the species.

**Time**

6:52 am

**Clear day**

 19 °C

**Altitude**

39 ft



d. 8:40 AM	○	BYRON BAY
d. 9:05 AM	○	BRUNSWICK HEADS
d. 8:45 AM	○	BILINGA (OPP GOLD COAST AIRPT)
d. 9:30 AM	○	SURFERS PARADISE - GOLD COAST
d. 10:00 AM	○	SOUTHPORT - GOLD COAST
a. 11:00 AM	○	BRISBANE



# Brunswick Heads

 December 13, 2025 in Australia, Brunswick Heads

First stop is Brunswick Heads where the boats leave for Julian Rocks nature reserve for snorkelling.

Not very much to see as the bus stop is not on the sea front.

**Time**

7:58 am

**Clear day**

 20 °C

**Altitude**

20 ft



Mystery Athens

SWAN

1/4 P  
PARALLEL  
9-5

1/4 P 2P  
METER  
9-5 9-5  
INCL. PUBLIC INCL. PUBLIC  
HOLIDAYS HOLIDAYS  
PARALLEL PARALLEL

24832002

24832002



## Bilinga

 December 13, 2025 in Australia, Gold Coast City

Next stop is Bilinga where we arrive half an hour before we left the last stop 😄

Once again, we have gained an hour going from NSW to QLD

**Time**

8:37 am

**Clear day**

 23 °C

**Altitude**

26 ft





# Burleigh

 December 13, 2025 in Australia, Gold Coast City

On the way to Surfers Paradise we go through Burleigh where they are part way through constructing the Gold Coast Light Railway.

There is quite a 'Miami' influence along the Gold Coast including an appropriately named Chinese Restaurant

**Time**

9:02 am

**Partly cloudy**

 25 °C

**Altitude**

43 ft





# Surfers Paradise

 December 13, 2025 in Australia, Gold Coast City

Surfers Paradise is very built up. A long way from Byron Bay in many ways, not just miles.

They are already selling apartments on a building that will ultimately have 90 floors and become the tallest building for miles around. Even though they are only on floor 8.

**Time**

9:28 am

**Clear day**

 26 °C

**Altitude**

43 ft

**Video**







## Hotel drama

 December 13, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

We arrive on time in Brizzy and take a taxi to the hotel which is lovely and perfectly located for all the action along the river.

Graham is sent out of the room to refill the water bottle, the filling points being on the first and third floor; we are on the second.

Graham decides to take the stairs as it's only one floor up or down.

When Graham gets to the first floor he cannot open the door.

When Graham returns to the second floor he cannot open the door.

Graham bangs on the wall of the stairwell which is next to the room but there is no response.

There's no 'Skippy the bush Kangaroo' around to rescue Graham who's stuck down the lift shaft.

Fortunately Graham has his Apple Watch on and is able to call Fee who comes to the rescue.

Fee will be sent for water next time. She wouldn't be daft enough to try and use the fire exit.



Fiona Smith The truth is I actually suggested he use the fire exit! 🤔🤔🤔



Fiona Smith Check out the new video! 😊

Time

11:16 am

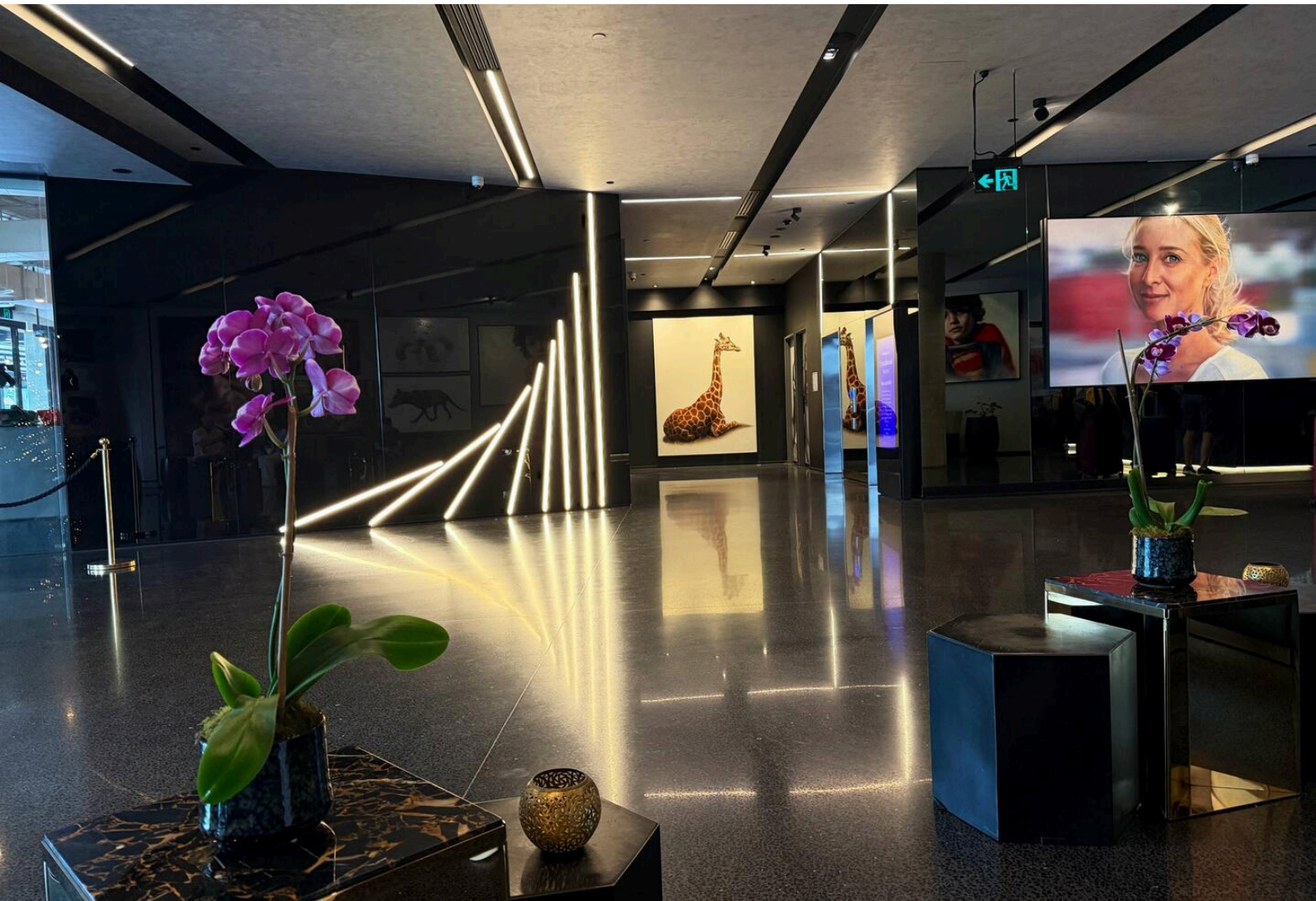
Clear day

☀️ 29 °C

Altitude

46 ft

Video









# Floater Fee

 December 13, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

Fee has acquired a floater in her eye today so we find an optician who is able to do an eye test for a surprisingly reasonable fee.

In the meantime, Paddington tries on some frames while Graham pops round to the Apple Store (allegedly established in 1849 which must make it one of the earliest ?)



Fiona Smith Quite a big floater but no damage to the retina and my eye is okey. Optometrist asked me to keep an eye 👁️ on it!

Time

12:57 pm

Clear day



Altitude

89 ft





Day 22



# Opa

 December 13, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

Lunch is at Opa, a greek style restaurant on the water front.

Fee has lamb ribs and Graham has some interesting looking Spanner Crab.

Paddington gets a new crab shell hat

Time

2:01 pm

Clear day

 29 °C

Altitude

131 ft







Day 22



# Evening

 December 13, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

The views walking around the city are great, especially at night.

Time

7:45 pm

Clear night



Altitude

46 ft

Video







## Coffee and a Croissant

 December 14, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

Sitting outside enjoying Coffee and a Croissant at 7am on a sunny 24 degrees Sunday morning overlooking the Brisbane River.

And it's only 11 sleeps till Christmas

**Time**

6:55 am

**Cloudy**

 23 °C

**Altitude**

43 ft



Day 23



# Holiday Romance

 December 14, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

The relationship was still going strong until someone pointed out that neither of the offspring resembles Paddington 🤪



Fiona Smith Oh dear, "C'est la vie"!

Time

10:06 am

Cloudy

 28 °C

Altitude

46 ft





## Lunch with Cheska and Sam

 December 14, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

Cheska is the lovely daughter of our great friend Don, who we used to have as a neighbour in Weybridge and we still keep in touch with, and meet up with, on a regular basis.

Cheska lives in Brisbane with Sam and knows a good restaurant when she sees one. She books 'Yoko' which just happens to be near our hotel, on the waterfront.

Coincidentally, both Fee and Sam have crustacean intolerance/allergy, so choosing the shared courses is fairly easy.

The food is delicious, the company and conversation is amazing.

It is so kind of Cheska and Sam to take time out of their weekend to come and meet us.

Don must be very proud of Cheska.



Fiona Smith We had a lovely lunch and it was great to meet Cheska and Sam. 🍽️

**Time**

12:32 pm

**Cloudy**

 30 °C

**Altitude**

30 ft





# Southbank

 December 14, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

After lunch we take the ferry up river to South Bank where there is a market, a park and even a man made beach and swimming area. You get a different perspective of the city from the river.

We stop at a bar which has live music.



Fiona Smith Card machines not working so good old cash saves the day!



Looks amazing! [Tricia]



Fiona Smith It was good fun x

Time

3:33 pm

Partly cloudy

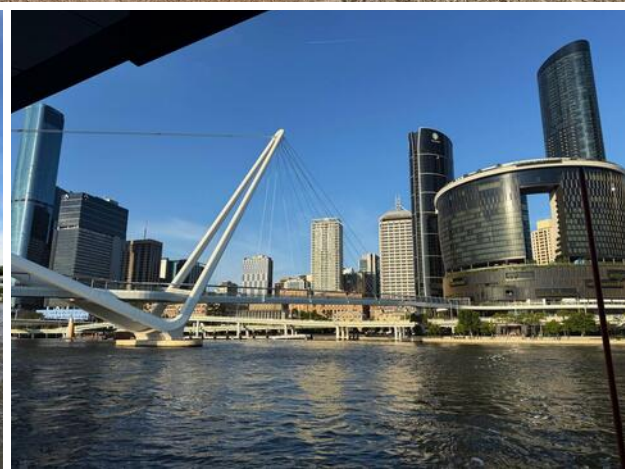
 31 °C

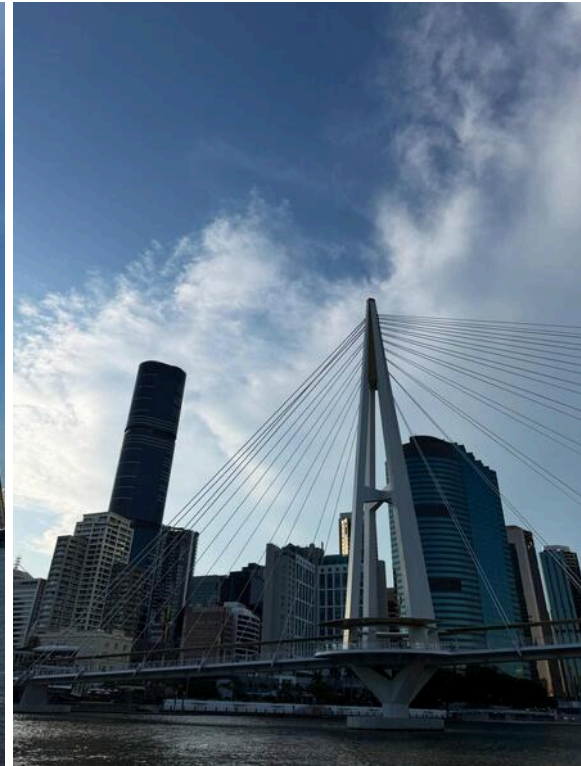
Altitude

26 ft

Video









# What a Mezze

 December 14, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

We return by ferry and walk past the weekenders enjoying the last of the sunshine on beanbags.

We manage to get a table at the busy Greco for some tasty Greek food.



Fiona Smith Food was delicious, we just had a couple of small plates. Brizzy is a fun and vibrant place.

**Time**

6:18 pm

**Clear day**

 27 °C

**Altitude**

30 ft





Day 23



# Nightcap

 December 14, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

We have a nightcap up on the roof terrace by the pool.

Time

7:39 pm

Clear night

 26 °C

Altitude

39 ft





Day 23



# Party Boat

 December 14, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

And the party boat rolls on down the river

Time

8:49 pm

Clear night



Altitude

36 ft

Video





## Great Sadness

 December 15, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

We awake to hear more of the horrific terror situation which was beginning to unfold last night when family and friends started checking in on our safety. Fortunately, for us, we are up in Brisbane at the moment.

Sixteen people including a child have died following a shooting at Australia's Bondi Beach, which targeted the Jewish community as more than 1,000 people attended an event to celebrate Hanukkah.

Two gunmen (a father and son) carried out the attack, with police investigating whether others were involved. One of the gunmen was killed, with a second in "critical condition", police say.



Terrible news. Happy you are both safe. [Tricia]



Fiona Smith ❤️

**Time**

6:11 am

**Partly cloudy**

 23 °C

**Altitude**

46 ft



# Brekkie

 December 15, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

Another sunny start to the day and another coffee and croissant before we head off for today's adventure.

Moreton Island: Dolphin Eco-Cruise & Tangalooma Wrecks Snorkel Tour

Time

7:11 am

Partly cloudy

 25 °C

Altitude

43 ft



07:29  5G 

**B B C** 

 a moment ago

**Brisbane**  

Next Hour  04:47 18:39

 **28°**

 0%

 2

**Sunny and light winds**

 UV



# Boat

 December 15, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

Today we are off to Moreton Island for a bit of snorkelling and turtle watching.

We are picked up on central Brisbane and taken out to where the boat is moored at Rivergate Marina.

It's a very nice boat called Mulgumpin which means "get you there very fast in comfort"

Actually it just means "Moreton Island"




Fiona Smith Gorgeous boat.

Time

9:19 am

Clear day

 31 °C

Altitude

16 ft







# Snorkelling

 December 15, 2025 in Australia, Moreton Bay

Moreton Island has the world's highest sand dune at 285m called Mount Tempest although it is in a different part of the island.

It also has some old metal wrecks which make for great snorkelling with an abundance of fish, sharks and coral growth. The Tangalooma Wrecks.

No underwater footage this time as Graham resisted the temptation to purchase a GoPro



**Fiona Smith** The Government dumped 15 boats in front of Morton Island in the 1960s to break up the waves as they kept eroding the land. Now it is an amazing eco wonder with many species of fish.

**Time**

2:43 pm

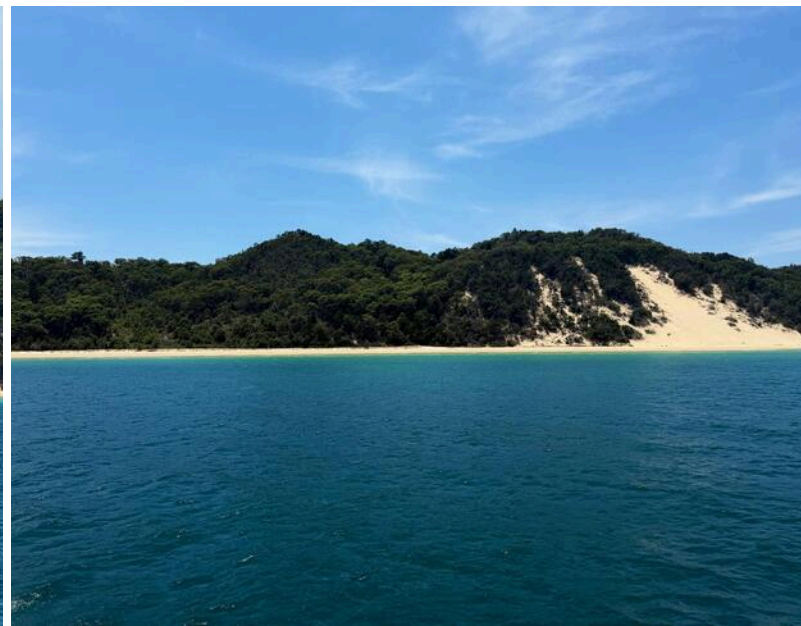
**Cloudy**

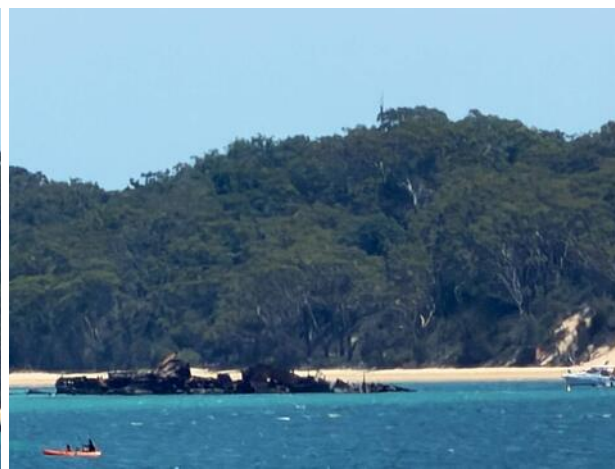
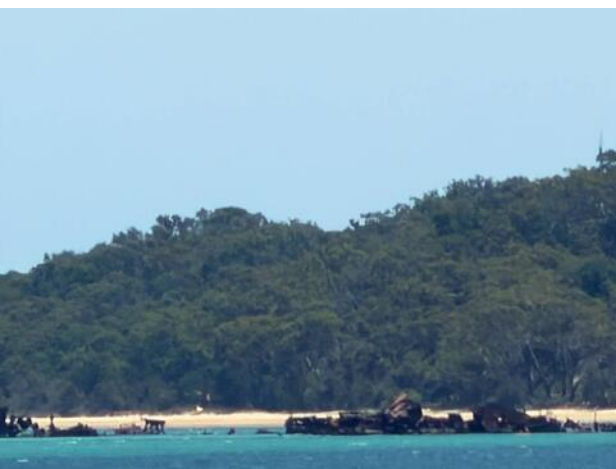
 28 °C

**Altitude**

Sea level

**Video**











# Return Boat Trip

 December 15, 2025 in Australia, Moreton Bay

After snorkelling there is lunch, swimming and paddle boarding (for those who wish to embarrass themselves), before returning to Brisbane with a bit of turtle spotting along the way.



Fiona Smith The food was very tasty and plenty to go round. The crew were brilliant.

Time

3:00 pm

Cloudy

 28 °C

Altitude

Sea level

Video









# Goodnight Brizzy

 December 15, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

After a long day, all that is needed on our last night in Brisbane is a simple burger and a walk along the waterfront.

Time

7:48 pm

Cloudy

 26 °C

Altitude

46 ft







## Mews for Breakfast

 December 16, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

It's breezy in brizzy for brekkie but it's still warm enough to sit outside Mews restaurant.

Graham makes a poor choice of Melbourne Breakfast Tea, thinking it might be similar to English Breakfast.

But No, it's got vanilla in it - VANILLA !

Who puts vanilla in breakfast tea ?

Maybe it's the folks here in Brisbane taking the mickey out of the Melburnians down south, by implying this is how they like their tea 😂



Fiona Smith Yuck 🤢 I stick to coffee ☕

**Time**

8:24 am

**Cloudy**

 25 °C

**Altitude**

43 ft





## Brisbane to Sydney

 December 16, 2025 in Australia, City of Brisbane

The incoming flight from Cairns is delayed, the new crew get on board and need to do their checks.

The Captain calls for Engineering support.

At 13:02 Graham's phone shows that the flight had departed at 12:55 and here we are sitting at the departure gate looking at the plane outside.

All this automated technology is wonderful until it gets ahead of itself 🤪

**Time**

1:02 pm

**Windy**

 27 °C

**Altitude**

23 ft

Vodafone AU

5G

Tue 16 Dec

13:02



JQ 817



1h 22m

**BNE**



**SYD**

12:55 Updated 2 hours ago 15:25

ARRIVAL

ARRIVAL

BAG CLAIM

TERM

GATE

**2**

**A57**

**D5**



Day 25



# Kimpton Margot

 December 16, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Although the flight from Brisbane leaves an hour and a half late, we arrive only 45 mins late, so not a bad flight really.

The hotel is marvellous. It is the old Water Company building from the 1920s. Very ornate.

They even have personalised bathroom accessories 🤪



Fiona Smith Not sure what happened to Mrs Smith!

**Time**

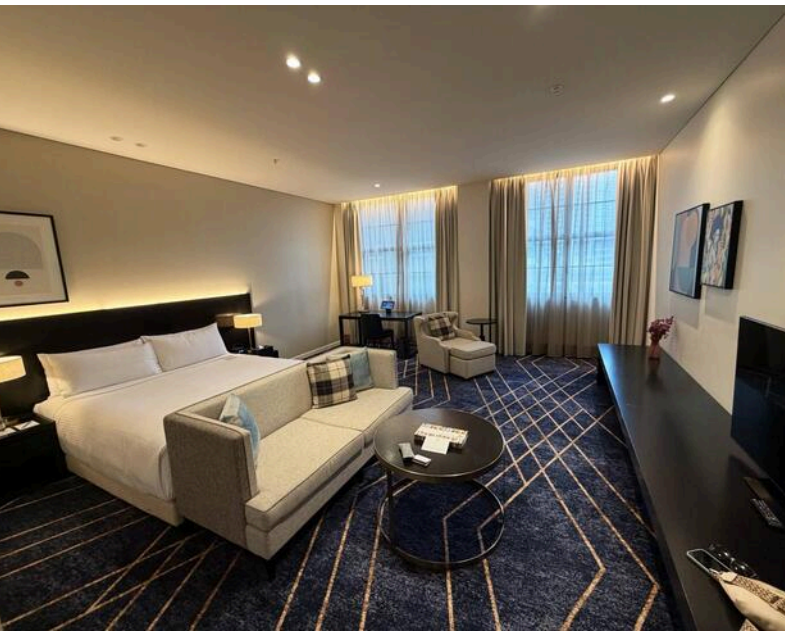
4:47 pm

**Cloudy**

 21 °C

**Altitude**

226 ft







# Myung Jang

 December 16, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

The hotel serves complimentary wine between 5pm and 6pm to hotel guests, which is a nice touch.

We find a lively pub called the 3 Wise Monkeys for some pre-dinner drinks before looking for somewhere to eat.

We are very close to Chinatown, which really should be called Asiatown now due to the variety on offer.

By chance we stumble across an amazing Korean BBQ place, tucked down an alleyway.

**Time**

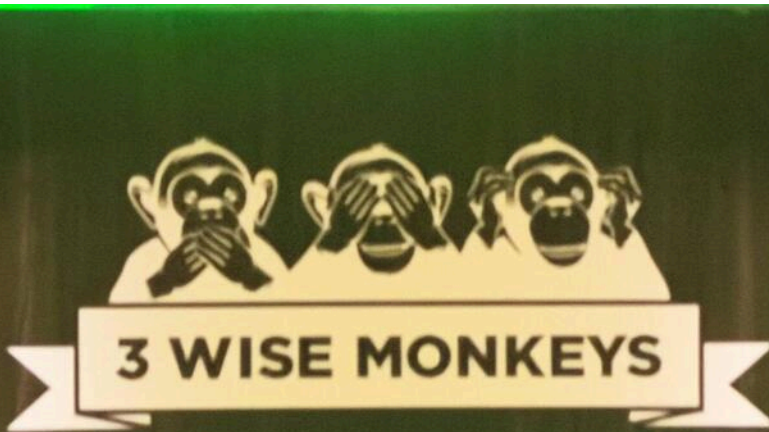
7:07 pm

**Cloudy**

 20 °C

**Altitude**

246 ft







# Food glorious food

 December 16, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

We have no idea what the menu is telling us so Graham makes an executive decision and orders Set B.

Set B turns out to contain enough food for at least 6 people.

The variety of thinly cut meat is amazing and we cook it on the open barbecue in the middle of the table.

**Time**

7:50 pm

**Cloudy**

 20 °C

**Altitude**

246 ft

**Video**







## Interesting company

 December 16, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Graham gets chatting to a gentleman sitting on his own close by.

This gentleman lives in the war-stricken Congo, helping the locals with education, water, shelter etc.

He comes back to Australia every three months to try and put on weight because the food in Congo is so limited and lacking in protein.

He has travelled extensively, visiting all 193 countries, apparently. Also apparently there are only about 100 people who have done so.

Gregory McKenzie is one of them.

Gregory is a man of our generation with views and opinions formed during the 60s 70s and 80s. He has a broad knowledge, enriched by his travels, and Graham and Gregory engage in much varied and reminiscent conversation. Both agree that we have lived in the best of times.

As we have such a wide variety and large portions of food which we have no way of eating, we share it with Gregory. Fee even prepares two boxes of leftovers for Gregory to take away in order to fatten himself up.

Gregory has been great company and is a master of interesting conversation.

**Time**

8:53 pm

**Cloudy**

 20 °C

**Altitude**

223 ft



Day 25



# Nightcap

 December 16, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

A little nightcap in the hotel bar finishes of the day nicely.

Benjy, our barman, is very proud of the award he received today for outstanding service.

There is also a lovely little private room lined with classic wines but we won't be using that.

**Time**

9:22 pm

**Cloudy**

 20 °C

**Altitude**

246 ft







# Breakfast at Margot's

 December 17, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

Today we have breakfast in the hotel. And it feels like breakfast rather than brekkie. The Kimpton Margot is a lovely, grand hotel and clearly popular for meetings and the like so, this morning, we are surrounded by corporates reliving their corporate 'night before', before heading off to their offices.

We, on the other hand will be going shopping after a quick visit upstairs to check out the rooftop bar and pool where we later spend the afternoon.

**Time**

9:29 am

**Partly cloudy**

 22 °C

**Altitude**

312 ft







# Shady Pines Saloon

 December 17, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

On the way out for an early dinner we drop into the Shady Pines Saloon. This is a quirky honky tonk bar in a basement with no signage. They play western style music and the walls are adorned with stuffed animals.




Fiona Smith It was very dark in the bar. It took a while for our eyes to adjust.

Time

4:36 pm

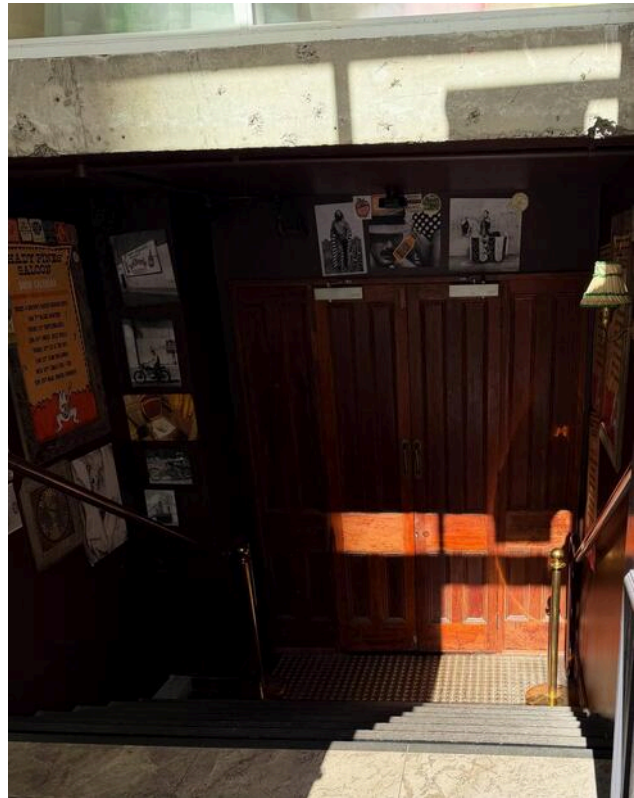
Clear day

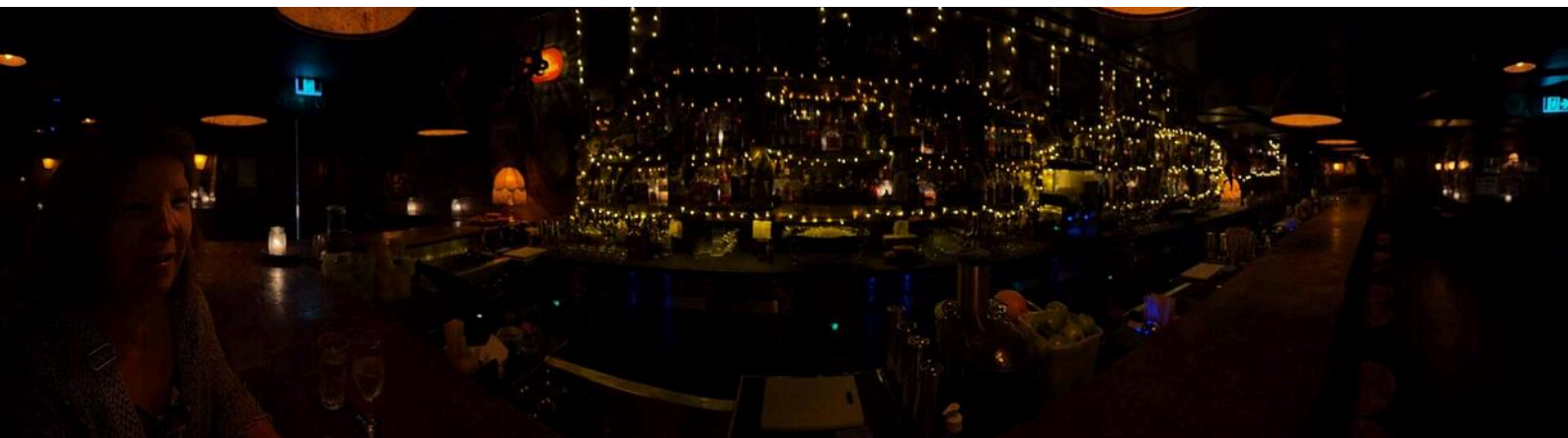
 25 °C

Altitude

135 ft

Video











# Italian Job

 December 17, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

We arrive at Primi Italian for our reservation at 5:30 where we are asked for at least one form of ID between us. We've never been asked for ID for spaghetti before. The lady explains that, as well as being an Italian restaurant, at the back through a door is a small casino. Very strange.

The food is delicious and the staff very friendly and attentive.

Time

5:31 pm

Clear day



Altitude

240 ft







# Return to Shady Pines

 December 17, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

As it's early, we pop back into Shady Pines on the way back to the hotel.

There are now quite a few people, some for afterwork drinks, some just there to mourn the fact they lost their dog, lost their job, lost their house, burying their head in Bourbon 🍷 but either way, they are all good ol' cowboys.

Not tonight, but a couple of nights each week the music is live, which is more than can be said for the stuffed animals

Time

7:11 pm

Clear day



Altitude

246 ft

Video





# Not amused

 December 17, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

On the way back to the hotel we come across a statue of a miserable looking Queen Victoria. Looks like it was modelled by Gary Oldman.

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas, and feeling it too as we travel home tomorrow

Time

8:28 pm

Clear night



Altitude

246 ft







# Checkout

 December 18, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

We have a late breakfast before checking out at 11.

Another hot day of 30c so we spend much of the day up on the roof terrace breaking for a light lunch at Nth Degree Cafe and a walk in Hyde Park accompanied by bin chickens.




Fiona Smith We also popped into St Mary's Cathedral and I lit a candle 🕯️ for mum 🥰

**Time**

11:45 am

**Clear day**

 28 °C

**Altitude**

292 ft







## Family meetup

 December 18, 2025 in Australia, Sydney

We meet up with Monique and family who are on their way to Japan.

A drink and a catch up in the Departure Lounge before we head on our respective ways.



Fiona Smith Fantastic to all meet up again before we head off on our Christmas celebrations. 🎄 xxx

**Time**

8:33 pm

**Clear night**

 28 °C

**Altitude**

30 ft



Day 27



# Flight to Dubai

 December 18, 2025 in Australia, Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport

Emirates certainly know how to put on a good show.

Comfy seats and lots of goodies.

The flight itself takes an extra hour and a half due to the weather in Dubai.

But still in plenty of time for the connecting flight which is also delayed.



Fiona Smith Lovely flight, ✈️ very comfortable and lots of goodies found their way into my bag! 🥰 Now in Dubai waiting for more information about our flight..

Time

10:13 pm

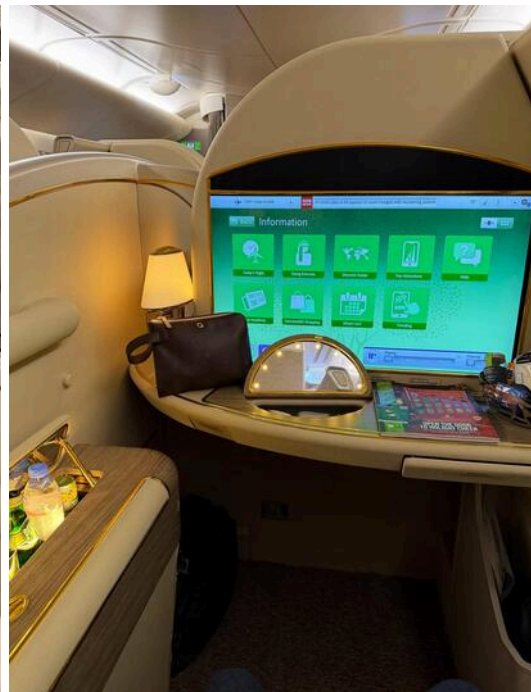
Clear night



Altitude

26 ft

Video







Day 28



# Shower time

 December 19, 2025 in India, Samri(Kusmi) Tahsil

After a good sleep it's time for a shower at 38,000 ft (which is a first) followed by breakfast.



Fiona Smith Having a shower on the flight was a wonderful experience. Hot water gorgeous products and a platter of fruit with lemon tea waiting for when we finished xxx

**Time**

2:37 am

**Clear night**



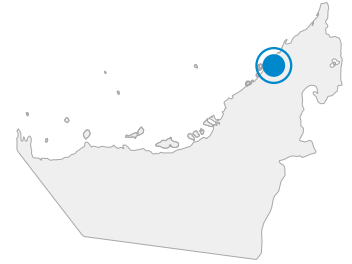
**Altitude**

2,247 ft





Day 28



# Delays

 December 19, 2025 in the United Arab Emirates, Dubai

So the weather in Dubai has certainly caused chaos with flights. We await updates in the lounge.

Things could be worse, Graham gets to catch up on The Ashes cricket on his iPad using his VPN

Things could be better if England could actually win a game

**Time**

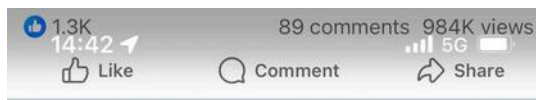
7:56 am

**Rain**

 19 °C

**Altitude**

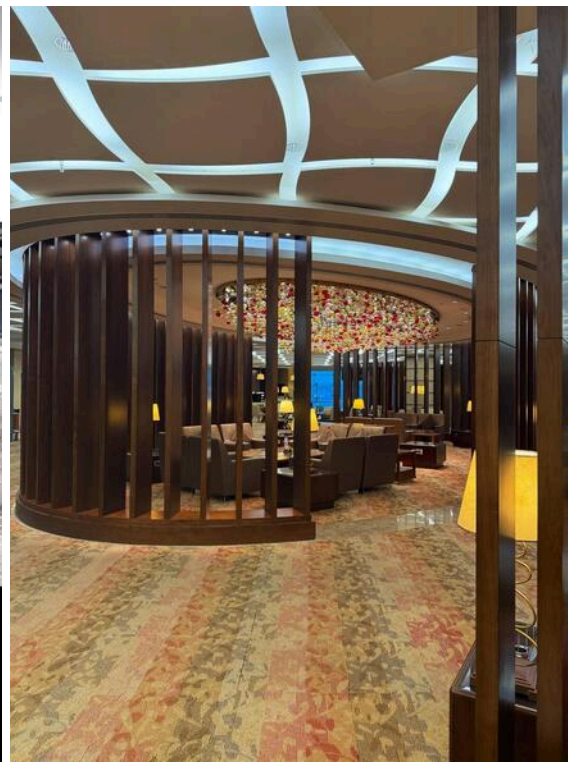
23 ft



**BREAKING**



**Flights cancelled and drivers stranded after storm floods Dubai**



TNT SPORTS 1  
LIVE



**2-107**  
LEADS BY 192

HEAD

**60** 83

**KHAWAJA**

**23** 34

**CARSE**  
**1-27** 9

○○○○○○○

PARTNERSHIP 54 (70)





## Last Flight

 December 19, 2025 in England, London Gatwick Airport

We make the connection for the final flight from Dubai to Gatwick with lovely views of the snowcapped mountains in east Turkey whilst we enjoy a visit to the bar.

Once again, the service is top notch with lots of goodies which we cram into our hand luggage.

Food and wine is perfect including one of the best beef meals we have enjoyed on the whole trip. Amazing that they can deliver such quality at 38,000 ft.

The offer is there, but we decline the opportunity of another shower up in the skies, even though Paddington thinks seriously about it.

Graham, Fee and Paddington all make it home for Christmas



Fiona Smith We have so many goodies from the flight we needed an extra bag 😊

**Time**

12:30 pm

**Clear day**

 11 °C

**Altitude**

148 ft

**Video**





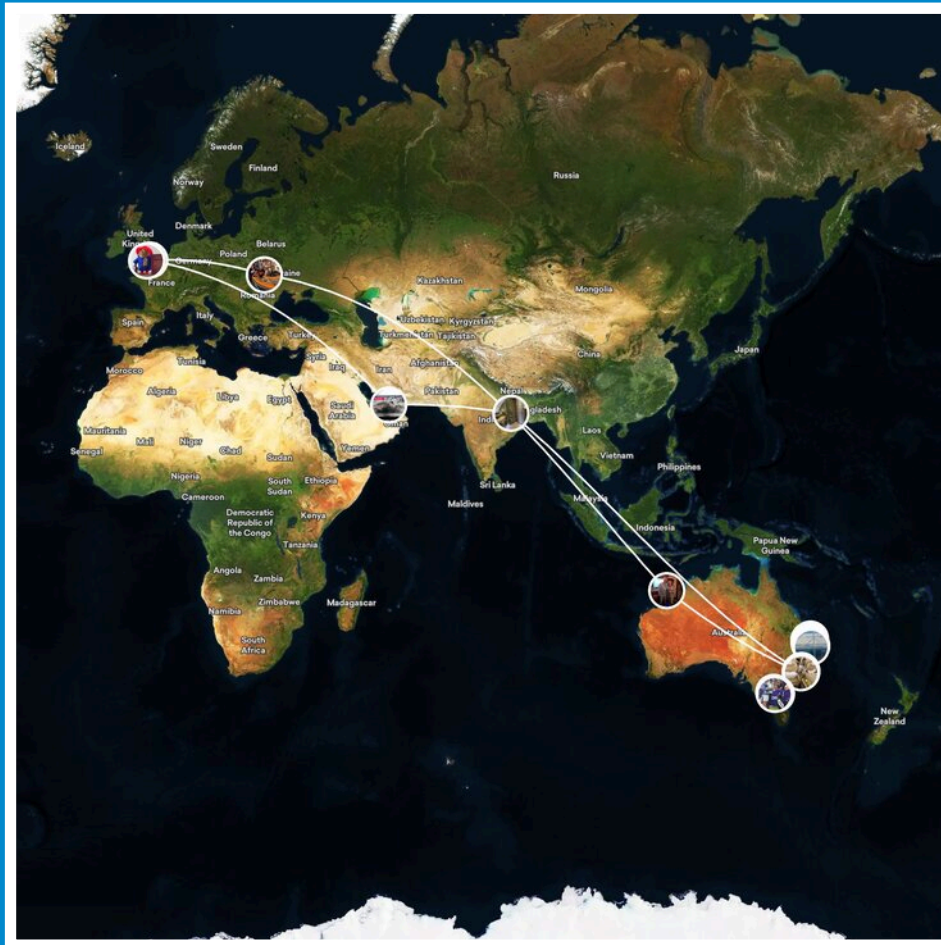












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