

Christmas in Melbourne



Christmas of 2010 was my first ever away from home. It was an interesting experience for sure, but one echoed by many other people in the hostel, not particularly Christmassy. There's just something about it being 'summery' weather for Christmas which is just plain wrong!

I must admit I just spent Christmas Eve on the beach, with an eski full of beer. The weather throughout my time in Melbourne wasn't particularly special; when the sun was out and the wind wasn't blowing it was really nice and warm. But the wind just didn't stop blowing, and it was harshly cold coming up from the south. That said we managed to make the most of one of the nicest days on Christmas Eve. Our group on the beach started out as just me and a couple of Swiss girls I'd met at the hostel but quickly swelled to about 8 or so of us as we managed to spot other people from hostel. I did treat myself to a rather large Steak for dinner in Christmas celebrations. That said it was discounted to \$6 at Safeway, but it filled up the plate! It was mostly great because it was cheap and huge rather than being anywhere near the spectacular awesomeness of some of the ones on offer in Argentina. That evening I had a few more beers and got chatting to a bunch of people, I was meant to be going out with the chaps who I'd been on the beach with but after being forced to change out of shorts and sandals into jeans and shoes to go out? seriously it's hot out here and they're not scruffy so why should guys have to wear jeans and shoes?! Bah? Anyway I started chatting to a couple who'd just arrived in our room and were feeling a little bit lost on Christmas Eve and unsure exactly what to do. They are kinda doing my trip of South America, Oceania and South East Asia in reverse, so it was cool to swap stories about places been and plans for the next few months. Anyway after a while we went downstairs and bumped into some other people who were going out and we followed. It was now Christmas Day and about 12.30am, and our first attempt to get in somewhere with a group of about 12 failed despite splitting up into small groups. They seem to be quite strict in many places in Australia and bouncers often decide on a whim whether they want to let you in or not. We managed to get into the next place, The Espy, fine though where there was a live band playing, their own stuff aswell 'opposed to being a cover band which was what I was expecting. Anyway the alcohol in Australia is really expensive by the way. I paid \$10 for a vodka and coke, \$9 for a JD and Coke, and then \$8 for a Coopers Pale Ale. That's nearly £20 for 3 drinks! After that lot I was at the point where by I'd sobered up actually and wasn't going to get any drunker without spending a small fortune so headed back to the hostel. It was like 2am mind, so not exactly early!



So Christmas Day then. I'd booked myself onto the hostel Christmas Dinner. Which came in at a cool \$20 which covered all food and drink. That said it wasn't a traditional Christmas Dinner, more an Aussie variation, or at least that's what they claimed. If some Aussies could verify this that'd be cool. There was a bunch of cold meats and nibbles for a starter. Then a huge wait for the main, which was basically chicken, potato salad, ham, cheese, bread, cold noodles and some salad. There was lots of it, but it wasn't anything so special and not really Christmassy. It could have at least been turkey instead of Chicken! I wasn't helped out by the fact I was feeling quite rough from the previous night, and whilst I kept tucking into the nibbles by the time the main came around I struggled. I was actually still hungry but my stomach was a little unsettled and I just couldn't eat anymore. I was feeling so rough I actually went to bed and managed to sleep from 3pm to 6pm! I did at least manage to do something Christmassy that evening? watching a classic movie on TV! Back to the Future III that is! This was then followed by a Skype call home, which unfortunately didn't include them opening presents I'd ordered for them. They'd managed to be out when they were delivered and then failed to get to the post office to pick them up on Christmas Eve before it shut! Useless! I haven't felt home sick at all on my trip so far, but I must admit the missing comfort of being at home over Christmas does niggle a little when you don't have it.



Boxing Day was Ashes day! This meant a rather early start to get to the stadium in time. For those who don't know the MCG is (I think) the biggest cricket stadium in the world, and can seat a 100,000 people. Despite heading off with plenty of time to spare, the trams running only every half hour on Boxing Day and having to queue up a cool 30 minutes to collect my tickets from the Box Office meant that I missed the first 45 minutes of play and the first Australian wicket! I managed to find a radio station on my phone so that I could listen to the play whilst outside though so at least I knew what was going on. I finally got in and I was right in the top tier pretty much at the back, with Aussies all around me! The place was pretty full, apart from one side which was pretty much empty. Oh and the posh part where everyone was inside in the executive area instead of sitting in their seats.



As the game progressed more and more Aussie wickets fell and just before lunch we managed to get Hussey's wicket. A few balls later it started to rain. That was pretty much the vital moment really, Hussey batted so well in Perth and was a major catalyst towards the Australians winning that game. The rain came in pretty hard, but with it being lunch there break wasn't too bad. I could hardly see the sky scrapers at some points with the rain though and it was really quite cold for the middle of an Australian summer. I'll probably be longing for that type of weather again in a few weeks time when the temperatures are getting close to 40 degrees! Play restarted after about a 90 minute break and soon we started cutting through the Australian wickets pretty quickly, we managed to get 3 with out them scoring a run at one point, and before we knew it they were bowled out for less than a 100. Some random stats for you, the last time we did that was in Manchester 1956, and the time before was 1912! Just to show you how rarely that happens! I was a little nervous about how England would fair when batting though. The weather had meant it was really set up for bowlers on

that first day. However the openers Strauss and Cook batted technically superbly, if rather boringly from a spectacle point of view to end the day unbeaten with already a 50 or so run lead on the Australians! There were quite a few shenanigans going on in the crowd from mostly the Brits during the game too. Firstly there was a game of keepy uppy with the beach balls spreading over several tiers of the stadium, and then there was the beer cup snakes, which were rather impressive. One in the top tier managed to go all the way from the bottom of the tier all the way up to the top! It was a pretty top day in all.

I had a day and half in Melbourne after that which I spent pottering about seeing a few things here and there. Most of the time I hung out with the couple who were in my room that I'd met on Christmas Eve. We wandered around the museum of moving images in downtown Melbourne on Monday which was pretty interesting with rather random little interactive things you can do showing the manipulation of images etc as well as other areas detailing the history of TV and Cinema. And it was free, and that always helps!



Then on Tuesday morning before flying to Sydney for New Year I went on the Neighbours tour with them. It had to be done really, but when I actually got there I found myself more nonplussed about it than I expected! There was two buses going with about 20 odd people on each, and the tour leaders for both were as you'd expect, stereotypical middle aged women who are slightly obsessed with the soap! The trips were pretty much completely full of English people too! First we were shown some of the outdoor sets at the filming studios before they drove us around what was for 20 years used for Erinsborough High which I must admit I didn't really recognise, before heading down to what is Ramsey Street or Pin Oak Court as it's called in real life. Any scenes in the back and front gardens are all filmed here, but the insides of the houses don't match those shown on TV. They're all filmed in the studios. The real residents have to give the directors 6 months' notice to any changes they wish to make to the houses in order for changes to be written into the show! And should any of the houses be sold then the new owners have to accept the filming contract for the show too! A few photographs later we drove back to St Kilda where we met the actor 'Ben Nichols' who played Stingray a few years back. I must admit I was a little disappoint and hoping for a bit more of a cult figure, but hey it was always likely to be someone who was inbetween jobs!

Anyway that pretty much wrapped up my time in Melbourne. I managed to miss a few pretty cool things like Philip Island and the Great Ocean Road, which are both day trips out of Melbourne, as well as not having really investigated any bars in and around Melbourne or St Kilda, but it was just too expensive really and a lot of people just drank in the hostel for a while. Anyway I may end of back in the region in the coming months for some random reason. So I'll have something to do then!