

Hi Everyone,

As you may know Australians drive on the other side of the street in keeping with their British heritage. So it takes some adjusting to change one's driving patterns to this, whether it is by car, bike or on foot. You have to really look in all directions when crossing the street because our habitual sense of where a car could be coming from is wrong.

Also, here in Perth and the rest of Australia, cars have the right of way and pedestrians better get out of the way. This is very different from California, where the pedestrians have the right of way and can generally expect cars to watch out for them.

Here in Perth you often have to cross the street ½ of the way at a time. City planners typically provide a waiting area in the center of the road for you to wait for the traffic to clear to be able to cross completely to the other side. So during busy times, you can find yourself waiting in the middle while traffic zooms by in both directions. It is a bit tricky to say the least. And, as the picture shows, the guard rail at that crossing has already been hit and doesn't give much of a sense of security.



Center of the road, street crossing island



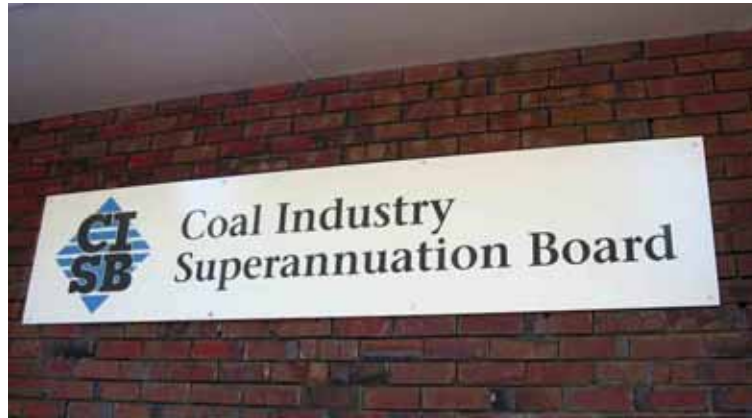
Cars have the right of way

Another major difference here compared to the US is the shopping hours. Most stores are closed in the evenings and on Sundays. It seems to really increase the quality of life because people are not out shopping every day and have more time for social activities. It actually relaxing - people plan meals better and find other things to do.



Hours of a major supermarket, similar to Safeway

Australian English is quite interesting. Amazingly, you can use it to spell check a Word document. One phrase that is used a lot nowadays is “Superannuation.” I had no idea what it meant. Then I found out it means “retirement fund” – that is, the amount that you and your employer save for yourself above your annual salary. It was not something I could figure out logically. A bit like being illiterate.



Office for the Coal Industry's retirement fund

When you go into a shop, the salesperson will greet you by saying “How ya going?” At first I didn’t have an answer, other than I’m not going anywhere. But I’ve since learned that it is the Australian version of “how ya doing?” Things do seem a bit upside down here. Or maybe the northern hemisphere is actually upside down...

Art at Cottlesloe Beach

Every year there is a very popular outdoor art exhibit on display at Cottlesloe Beach, which is a suburb city next to Perth. Artists entered about 50 different works - and place them on the beach. We were very impressed by the humor and creativity. Here are some examples:



Big tricycle on Cottlesloe Beach



Ancient Egyptian tricycle with a motor



Ten foot watch lying in the sand



Wire fish sculpture placed so it appears fish are swimming in the sea



Scrabble imagine sign with the "I" missing, so a real "I" can sit in

Freeway Bike Hike

In March we participated in a 60km (43 mile) "Freeway Bike Hike" benefit for asthma sufferers. The City closes down the northbound lanes of the Kwinana Freeway through town on a Sunday morning once a year. We did the ride with 5000 other bicyclists. Chevron sponsored a team, and paid for our registration and also supplied bicycle shirts and pants.

The best way to get to the start of the ride, 30km (21 miles) south of Perth is via the train. So we got up really early (4:30 AM) and bicycled on our tandem bike to the train station, hoping to get a place on the train. We couldn't imagine how we, and the hundreds of riders waiting at our train stop, would fit into the passenger cars of the train.

The first train that pulled into our station was completely filled with bike and riders and did not even stop. But the answer to our questions was apparent as the train passed by and we looked in through the windows – everyone sat in a seat, and held their bike upright on it's rear tire! Luckily the next train was not entirely filled, and stopped at our station.

But we had our Santana tandem bike with us, which is about a third longer than a single bike! Magically our tandem just fit vertically – there was about 10mm (1/2 inch) of space between the roof of the train and the edge of the handlebar, with the front tandem wheel positioned flat, parallel to the roof. Once a train car is full there is no way to move at all.



Sharing a train car on the way to the start – 5AM



Looking the other direction...



After the ride

Rottnest Island

Another day we took a ferry out to Rottnest Island, which is about 13 miles out in the Indian Ocean from Perth. The island is very beautiful. No cars are allowed, and so apart from a few maintenance vehicles, everyone walks or rides a bike.

Early Dutch explorers named the island Rottnest, meaning, “Rat Nest Island” because of the large rat-like animals they found there. It turns out that they are not rats, but are instead marsupials - having a pouch. The aboriginal people and modern Australians too, call them [Quokkas](#) (pronounced kwokas with the o short). We were very excited to see our first Quokka. They have no fear of humans because there are no predators on the island. By the end of the day, though, we found Quokkas to be great pests – begging for food under our feet as we sat at an outdoor café for lunch.



Rottnest Island Visitor's Center



Lighthouse on Rottnest Island



One of many beautiful coves on Rottnest Island



A quokka up close and personal

Exercise Fun

In my spare time I've been doing a lot of exercise classes, yoga, learning to swim and boxing of all things, which I find very fun. Boxing workouts are very common here in Western Australia to build up the arm muscles – and it kind of fits into the rough, tough image of Australians. I work out with a personal trainer, who holds up flat pads as a target and keeps me on my toes. He says he is getting me ready for being married. 😊



Cathie working out with boxing gloves

Perth Zoo

A recent adventure was to the Perth Zoo. We went with a colleague of Bill's from Chevron, Lynn Silpngarmlers and her family. The Perth Zoo is said to be the best small zoo in the world. The zookeepers take the elephants for frequent exercise walks around the grounds, and people get out of the way! Kangaroos (small females) hop around their fenced area, and people are free to walk through with no fences separating the two. We had a good time seeing all kinds of interesting animals.



Playing with a baby kangaroo



Rhinoceroses at feeding time



A lion in the bush



A giraffe eating lunch



Mr. Orangutan checking out the people at the zoo



Cathie and Mr. Orangutan touching hands



A giant Python snake at rest



Bill hanging out with his relatives at the zoo!!



Bill and Cathie with very friendly lizard

Anzac Day

This past Saturday (May 25th) was ANZAC Day – which is equivalent to the US Memorial Day. ANZAC stands for: Australian New Zealand Army Corp. We attended a dawn service in Perth's King's Park – with 40,000 other people!

[ANZAC Day](#) commemorates the loss of soldiers in foreign wars, and is focused on the excessive losses suffered in the World War I battles of Gallipoli in Turkey and the Somme in France.

It was in WWI that Australia & New Zealand came out from behind the British umbrella so to speak. Before Gallipoli in particular, the Australian & New Zealand military looked up to the British soldier as a role model to try to emulate, and had little respect for the Turks. Afterwards the level of respect switched – and both budding countries, Australia and New Zealand, gained standing and respect nationally, apart from the former British Empire.



World War I Memorial in Kings Park, Perth, AU

Well, Bill and I are returning to the US to get married in a short while. Afterwards we'll return to Perth for another two months to complete Bill's work assignment.

Cheers from Down Under,

Cathie & Bill