

HAPPY AUSTRALIA DAY FROM THE PRICE FAMILY!



G'day USA! What an adventure this past year has been! We missed sending out a Christmas letter or even a New Year's letter this year. "No worries," as the Aussies say, we'll just send a letter when we happen to get around to it; in fact, we may start a new tradition by sending an annual Australia Day letter (though we've missed that now too). Australia Day, by the way, was celebrated here on January 26 to commemorate the arrival of the first convict ships into Sydney Cove 222 years ago – kind of like Thanksgiving and the 4th of July rolled into one, but with a criminal twist on the pious pilgrims and founding fathers.

Oz. Well, it's hard to believe we've been down under for six months already – the time is flying! As a bit of background to how we got here, about a year ago I volunteered to be the guinea pig for my company's expansion into Australia. We spent a good part of 2009 making arrangements for the move: packing, fixing up the house, and getting rid of much of the "stuff" we had accumulated over our eight years in Troutdale. Then, after several months of cutting through the red tape of the visa process, we hopped on a jumbo jet bound for "Oz." Given the change of scenery, it's hard to remember things that happened at the beginning of 2009, but here's our best shot at a recap of some of last year's events:



Road Trippin'! Amidst all the packing, we took a quick trip to the rainy Oregon Coast over spring break. We visited the aquarium, took a dune buggy ride, and basically bummed around the beach towns for a couple of days. Next it was off to Utah for a family road trip to see the Price relatives one last time before the big flight. We visited my sister Kamber's family in snowy Idaho along

(well sort of...) the way, took in a general conference session with the boys, and felt really old at a 20-year reunion commemorating the opening of the Dresden LDS Mission. Hard to believe the wall came down 20 years ago! And it's hard to believe how much (and how little) people can change in 20 years. The next trip involved another 20-year reunion: a solo trip to Grandville, Michigan to see what became of the Class of '89. I stayed with my sister Kerrie in Ann Arbor and got to get to know a whole crew of nieces and nephews a bit better.



Heart Camp. As a final summer adventure, Jaedin got invited to attend Camp Taylor in California, a special camp for kids with heart conditions and their families. First we went as a family and then Jaedin and Cam got to participate in the youth camp together, where I served as a counselor for another group of boys. It was quite an adventure trying to corral twelve 12-year olds for a week. I came out of it feeling really old as well as a bit traumatized over what adolescence might have in store for our own kids.

Last Impressions. Not knowing when we'd be back in the States again, we spent the last few weeks before the flight going through a series of lasts: last trip to the favorite restaurants, last trip to grandma and grandpa's in Eugene, etc. We took an office outing to the ballpark for an all-American sendoff, and then, suddenly, after all that waiting, the departure date still managed to spring up on us. We found ourselves scrambling to take care of all the last-minute details right up until flight time, but the flight itself was fabulous. Luckily the kids are good travelers, with some added help from modern technology (the built-in video games kept them busy while we slept.) After a brief break in New Zealand, we caught our first glimpse of the sunburned country in a cold drizzle. We landed safe and sound, and after a few headaches finally cleared customs. So there we were on the airport curb: two suitcases a piece and a whole new world outside...



First Impressions. Those first few weeks were a bit of a blur. Melbourne is absolutely huge, and we dove right in looking for housing. Costco held the grand opening of their first Australian flagship store right here in Melbourne the day we arrived. We took that as a good sign, but then Murphy's Law hit with a fury, and things went rather

pear-shaped in a hurry, as they say here. After walking the wrong way into revolving doors, running grocery carts into people at the store, and doing the do-sa-do with a few people on the sidewalk, we eventually we got it all figured out and finally landed in a wonderful suburb called Berwick, right on the outskirts of the city. Now that we've settled in and have finally begun to venture out a bit more, here are some impressions on Australian life:

Fauna Australiana. We're still looking for our first koala or kookaburra sightings outside of the zoo. We have seen kangaroos, wallabies, and even wombats out in the wild, though you have to look a little harder than they'd have you believe in the movies. We woke up the first morning here to the most amazing sounds.



There are wild parrots and cockatoos all around; in fact, a squawking flock of fighting cockatoos migrates over our house each evening. But you really have to watch out for the famous swooping magpies. The flies here are big and pesky and they'll crawl right up your nose and into your ears. But they're stupid, too: you can go right up to them and flick them into oblivion. The spiders we've caught roaming through the house are hairy and humongous, but apparently it's the little ones you need to look out for. We've only seen a few harmless snakes so far, but watch out for the Giant Gippsland Earthworm, native to our neighborhood, which can be up to 12 feet long! Next they'll be telling us R.O.U.S.'s exist; if they do, they're bound to be native to Australia, too.

Strine. The kids haven't really picked up the Aussie dialect, but they do come home with new jargon every day. Here's a condensed language lesson: Thanks is ta, bye is ta-ta, trash cans are rubbish bins, diapers are nappies, napkins are serviettes, candies are lollies, a crossing guard's a lollipop, popsicles are icy poles, awesome is sweet as, mom is mum, good food is yum, breakfast is brekky, dinner is tea time, take-out is take-away, fries are chips, chips are crisps, tomatoes are tomatoes (as in to-mah-toes), tires are tyres, a township's a shire (cool!), a field is a paddock, and the pharmacist is a chemist (makes you wonder what they're cooking in the lab!) Busy is flat out, all out is full on, shady is dodgy, the school is a primary, primary is...well, still primary. Younglings are kindys, padwans are preps, and high school is college. Parking lots are car parks, shopping carts are trolleys, trolleys are trams, strollers are prams, lots is heaps, markers are texters, jackets are jumpers, shirts are tops, trunks are boots, hoods are bonnets, Z is zed, and H is pronounced with a leading voiceless pharyngeal fricative (and yes, by the way, that was just a sorry excuse to use the word fricative in context.) And finally, herbs are herbs, as in Herbie, likewise led with the fricative (oops, I did it again).

Tucker. Aussie meat pies scored a big hit with the kids; not so with the vegemite sandwiches. The kids definitely miss their American food. Taco Bell is nowhere to be found, so Lindy had decided to become Taco Bell's first franchisee here. We finally found an import store that sells Taco Bell sauce, though, so we might be ok for a while. They do have Krispy Kreme, KFC, 7-11, and a few other American chains if you look hard enough. Lately Lindy has discovered a whole bunch of American restaurant recipes online and is trying to copy them in the kitchen so the kids don't forget their roots.

Schoolies. The kids got two summer breaks in a row, which almost turned their brains to mush; now they've just started back into the new school year,



and they all love it. For one, they've only got 7 states to learn (and the capital cities are pretty much the only cities), so it keeps things a bit simpler than back home. But they did have to learn a new national anthem and Aussie versions of the Christmas songs. The kids all have to wear uniforms to school, and, thanks to the hole in the ozone layer directly overhead, they have to wear full-brimmed Aussie outback hats out on the playground.

Driving Dyslexic. The mirror image driving sure was nerve-racking the first few days. The kids got to learn some choice new Aussie slang words – pretty much every word in the book – as fellow drivers offered their commentary on my driving skills. But then they gave us our Australian driver's licenses anyway – luckily without a road test! We rented a talking GPS unit the first few days to get our bearings and to help us wind our way through the roundabouts. Pretty soon every time we'd approach a roundabout, Berkeley would shout out, "enter the roundabout!" mimicking our electronic guide in a perfect little Aussie dialect. We got stuck in the middle of a few of them, and now I realize why the land down under is the land where men chunder. [Why the women glow, I haven't quite figured out yet, but it probably has something to do with the hole in the Ozone layer.]

Melburnian Life. Well overall, we're really enjoying Melbourne, and we're getting used to the differences in lifestyle. The playing fields here are all ovals, and the kids have had to learn the rules to all sorts of new sports. A mailman on a moped rides across your lawn to deliver the mail (and doesn't pick up letters – as we found out after days of accumulating outgoing mail in the mailbox). The Melbourne area has a very international feel to it. We really haven't met a whole lot of native Australians – seems everyone here comes from somewhere else. In fact, just by chance we happen to live right by some people I used to know in Germany. People here have barbecues for Christmas, for New Years, for Australia Day, and basically for every unbirthday in the book. We certainly don't miss Troutdale's winds right now, and we could definitely get used to this idea of having holidays in summer weather. The holiday heat does take some getting used to, though. We watched a holiday parade go by in 115 degree heat; it seemed a bit ridiculous seeing the fake snow and the guy in the Santa suit sweating it out on the float. Well, maybe it's more like Christmas in Bethlehem here after all.



Time Zoning. Because we're a day ahead of the U.S., we get to celebrate each holiday twice. The kids love the idea of having their Australian birthday one day, then prolonging the celebration for a day to celebrate their American birthday. (And I can get Valentine's Day gifts on clearance and still make the U.S. cutoff.) We got a sneak preview of 2010, welcoming the new year in a day early. So if you're ever wondering whether the sun will come up tomorrow, just drop us a line. We'll take a look outside and let you know. Though we miss out on Halloween, Thanksgiving, and a few other American holidays here, we now have some new holidays to add to the mix: Boxing Day, the Queen's Birthday, and even a holiday for a horse race!

Work. As the sole representative on the ground for a 10,000 person company, with a continent the size of the U.S. as a potential new market, planting the flag is definitely a daunting task, but it really is in many ways my dream job. I've been working my tail off trying to make it happen, and in the process I've met hundreds of people in the water industry here. The people have been extremely friendly and receptive. Plus I get to help out with platypus surveys...now that's cool stuff! If I could just get rid of the 3 am conference calls to the U.S., it would be ideal.

So with that snapshot of life down under, here are some details on the whole crew:



Jaedin. One of our main concerns prior to moving was whether the proper cardiac care would be available for Jaedin. As we learned, Royal Children's Hospital, a top-notch pediatric cardiology center, is right here in Melbourne. Jaedin has been enjoying school here, especially the computer lessons.

He is becoming a master at Movie Maker and 3D rendering. For his latest interest, he found some friends at school who do hip hop dancing at recess. He has choreographed a number of different routines to Michael Jackson songs; he even performed one of his dance numbers in front of the whole school at an assembly! And Jaedin has become a celebrity once again, this time being featured in a TV commercial for the Victorian schools. He still loves drawing and writing and wants to be an author. His favorite thing about Australia: grilling up shrimp on the barbie!

Cam. Neighborhood cricket games and footy (Australian Rules Football) at recess have kept Cam busy (and bruised). He has become a bit of a daredevil lately; his favorite stunt is jumping off the local pier. He also loves snorkeling. He's still trying to get his boomerang to come back, but other than that he seems to have adapted to life down under very well. His favorite thing about Australia: the Wii works here too!



Addisen. Don't let the little pink bike with a basket fool you – Addie has become a fearless contender on the local BMX course, leaving all the neighborhood boys in the dust. After a heavy investment into swim lessons last year, she seems to have finally picked it back up again. Her best friend at school is blind, and she has been learning to read Braille. To Dad's dismay, Addie has transitioned to having boyfriends instead of girlfriends this year. Her favorite thing about Australia: Dog-sitting Jack, the neighbor's dog.



Berkeley. Our "cheeky" little girl has become quite a music fan. She especially loves Beatles karaoke and Michael Jackson. She has actually nicknamed Jaedin Michael Jackson, since he's always wearing his signature hat. She sings non-stop, and has her own personal song for everything: the potty song, the brekky song, the mum's grumpy song, the kiddos are buggin' me song, the dinner song, the I-don't-like-my-dinner song, etc. Lately she's been singing "marching batilda" at the top of her lungs, and I haven't had the heart to correct the lyrics. Her favorite thing about Australia: Talking cockatoos.



Lindy and Krey. What else can we say? Starting over in a new country is a full-time job and then some. It's exciting and challenging and though we look at each other every so often and ask, "What are we nuts?" we wouldn't trade this experience for anything.



Tradition. The move has certainly not lightened the load of embarrassing moments to choose from this year:

#4. A Palestinian university group just happened to arrive at the airport right before us, so despite having arrived in plenty of time (for once), we still found ourselves running for the plane. After clearing security, I threw the kids onto a luggage cart piled high with the maximum allowable carry-ons. I made a run for the gate but lost control of the cart in the process. It went careening right into a trash can, spilling kids and luggage everywhere.

#3. Long after a blaze of heat waves made its way across Victoria, I realized that what I thought was the temperature dial on our swamp cooler was actually the fan speed indicator. I cursed that stupid cooler for months before realizing that I've had it cranked down at the lowest setting all along... "off."

#2. While teaching my first Sunday school class here, I dove right into the manual for a lesson on constancy amidst change. Beginning with an analogy, I asked the kids, "You know how when you look up into the night sky, the North Star never moves?" After some blank stares in response, I finally realized that as southern hemispherites, they've never seen the North Star!

#1. To demonstrate my abundant knowledge of the native Australian animal species, I mentioned to someone that I had seen a womprat in the wild. The WOMPRAT, of course, being indigenous to Tatoonie, has very little in common with the native Australian WOMBAT. Stupid American...

Oi! We hope this allegedly (-L) and admittedly (-K) nerdy letter finds you happy and well. Please pardon the length – it's the first letter I've written since arriving down under, so I guess I had some catching up to do. This year we're especially thankful to be officially done with diapers, for on-board video games, old friends, new friends, and family togetherness (a month in a hotel room tends to get you closer as a family one way or another). We do want to do better at keeping in touch from now on; we'd love to hear from you and find out how you're doing. Here's our info:



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We'll end with a line that Jimmy Buffett stole from Stephen Stills:

*When you see the Southern Cross for the first time,
You understand now why you came this way.
Fair dinkum, mate! Love, the Price Family*