

Podcast 141 – A Rainy Day in Melbourne

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia,
with Rob McCormack

Podcast Number 141 – A Rainy Day in Melbourne

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(This podcast is 11 minutes and 21 seconds long.)

Hi,

It's a rainy day in Melbourne. That is to be expected, as it is still winter as I make this podcast. Actually, Melbourne is known for being somewhat unreliable when it comes to the weather. There is a standing joke that, if you don't like the weather in Melbourne, wait 5 minutes. This means that we think the weather changes quickly, and often. It seems that way, I must say. I have lived in Perth, Canberra, Sydney and lastly Melbourne, so I have seen a large sample of the weather in southern Australia. The truth is, we Melburnians like to complain about the weather. In this podcast, I would like to talk a little about rainy days in Melbourne and what people do at such times.

If you've heard my podcast before you may know that I'm retired. My main hobby in retirement is motorcycling, so when it rains, it affects my motorcycling. I don't know if you've ever ridden a motorcycle when it's raining but it's not much fun. Water seems somehow to find its way in through your protective clothing into every little nook and cranny. You need really good water-proof riding gear.



It was fine when I left, but I got caught in the rain. Here I am as I return home, not happy.

However, getting wet is not really the major problem. It is

how the rain affects the riding experience that is the big disadvantage. As I explained in Podcast 135, the real fun in motorcycling is going around curves. The problem is, when riding in the rain, you have to slow down a lot, because it's quite dangerous when you're riding in the rain. When the road is damp or worse still wet, the amount of grip you can get between your tyres and the road is reduced. On a motorcycle it is very hard to judge how much grip you have available. When the bitumen is dry, it is amazing how much grip is available, especially if you have good quality tyres. You can lean the bike over quite steeply as you go around corners and still know that the bike will not lose its grip. However, when the road is wet, it's another story. Go into a corner a little too hard, and suddenly your front wheel can slide out from under you, causing the bike to crash onto its side on the road, throwing you off and causing you to slide dangerously across the bitumen and into a tree trunk or off the side of the road – a bad outcome. Or alternatively, the rear wheel can slide out, also causing the bike to crash and throw the rider off. All this sounds pretty alarming, and I know that there is actually still quite a lot of grip in the wet. The problem is that you just don't know where the limit of adhesion is. So the rule in the wet, for safe riding, is slow down. Or better still, stay home and do something else. There are better things to do on a wet day than ride your motorcycle.



Oh dear – just got back from a motorcycle ride in the rain. Not happy!

So what do people do in Australia on wet days? Staying home is

popular, in order to watch videos and television on streaming services. Actually, our behaviour during the pandemic lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 in Australia gives us a good idea of what people do when they can't go out. Research by the Australian Institute of Family Studies has shown that the most popular activity was watching movies and television shows on free to air television, cable television and streaming services. I know I did my share of this during our lockdowns here in Melbourne. In fact, in 2021, more than 75% of homes paid for at least one streaming service, so this is a growing area of in-home entertainment in Australia. I also took up baking for fun (see Podcast 125), which, along with doing art and craft, was the second most popular group of activities done at home. The third most popular activity was playing games or puzzles. This was followed by exercise outside (which was allowed and encouraged during the lockdowns). Of course, when it's raining, nearly everybody looks out the window and says, oh oh, it's raining. I can't do my exercise today. I plead guilty to that.

In fifth place was reading for pleasure. Interestingly, a survey by the Australian Council for the Arts found, in 2017, that 51% of their 3000 survey participants read between 1 and 10 books in a year, and another 41% read more than 10 books. I would be in the first group, as I don't read as much as I should. Perhaps unexpectedly in the era of the internet and streaming services, lots of Australians still love to read books. In fact, in 2021, Australians spent around \$1.3 billion buying books, which was an increase of around 2.5% over 2020. No doubt, even with our lockdowns now a thing of the past, reading is still a popular pastime on rainy days.

Now that the lockdowns are behind us, people are once more going to cafes, restaurants and theatres for their entertainment and socializing. That happens even when it's raining. Personally, I am still a little wary of crowded indoor places, as Covid-19 infections are still happening.

People, especially older people, are still dying from the pandemic each and every day. For example, I haven't been to a cinema since 2020, after our first lockdown. I'm in the 'at risk' group for Covid-19 infection (because of my age) so I will continue mostly to stay at home when it is raining.

But the rain doesn't always keep people at home. For example, in winter we play Australian Rules Football, which is very popular as a spectator sport here in Melbourne (see Podcast 2). Even on the coldest and wettest days, if there is a football match on at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), a fairly big crowd will turn up to watch it. While it is true that there are many seats which are under cover at the MCG, you can still see diehard fans with their plastic ponchos all sitting out in the rain close to the boundary fence, cheering on their favourite team. That is dedication. Me, I prefer to stay at home and watch the game on television. One thing is for sure – if it is raining, I certainly won't be out riding my motorbike.

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

Podcast 141 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?

You can take the quiz as many times as you like.

Start quiz

Vocabulary

- Play adhesion = grip
- Play alternatively = another example
- Play amazing = almost hard to believe
- Play art and craft = hobby activities where you make things with your hands
- Play behaviour = what people and animals do
- Play billion = 1,000 million
- Play bitumen = the black or blue material that roads are made of
- Play boundary fence = the fence between the playing field and the spectators
- Play cable television = when TV and movies are sent down a wire to your house e.g. Foxtel
- Play complain = when you are not happy with something and you tell someone else
- Play crash = when a car or motorbike has an accident
- Play curves = the shape of the road as it bends around a corner
- Play damp = when something is only slightly wet
- Play dedication = when you will continue doing something even though it is very difficult
- Play diehard = people who believe in something strongly, even if it is difficult or hopeless
- Play disadvantage = the bad things about an idea, object or

process

- Play encouraged = when people are told that they should do something, but you still have a choice
- Play entertainment = when you are watch something which makes you happy. For example, a film
- Play era = a period of time (usually many years)
- Play expected = what you or others think will happen or should happen
- Play fairly = a reasonable amount, not a big amount, not a small amount
- Play grip = when things stick together
- Play infections = when you catch a sickness
- Play lean = not upright, at an angle (a motorbike must lean to go around a corner)
- Play Melburnians = people who live in Melbourne. Notice the 'o' is missing
- Play motorcycling = riding a motorcycle (a two wheeled vehicle)
- Play nook and cranny = everywhere, in every place, especially the places hard to get to
- Play outcome = the result
- Play participants = people who take part in an activity
- Play pastime = something people do for pleasure when they are not working
- Play plead guilty = (here) I do that too, and I'm not proud of it

- Play pleasure = when something makes you pleased or happy
- Play ponchos = thin plastic cover which goes over your head and chest
- Play pretty alarming = when something makes you worried or scared, but not too much
- Play protective = it protects you from danger
- Play rear = behind
- Play reduced = made smaller, made less
- Play retired = no longer working, no longer has a job
- Play sample = a piece of something
- Play slide = when you slip and lose your grip
- Play socializing = meeting and talking with friends and family
- Play somewhat = a small amount, a little
- Play standing joke = a joke which everyone knows
- Play steeply = at a large angle
- Play streaming services = examples include Netflix, Stan, Disney+, Amazon Prime
- Play survey = when people are asked questions about a topic
- Play trunk = the large, round part of the tree which goes up from the ground
- Play tyres = the rubber part of the wheels on cars, trucks and motorcycles
- Play unreliable = cannot be predicted, will not always do what is expected

□ Play wary = when you are afraid of something bad happening, you are looking for danger

□ Play water-proof riding gear = (here) motorcycle clothing which water can't get through