

Podcast 27 – Sydney and Melbourne – Australian Cities

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

Podcast Number 27 – Sydney and Melbourne – Australian Cities

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Hi,

Most Australians live in the big cities and the two biggest are Sydney and Melbourne. I have lived in both. We lived in Sydney for 5 years and we have now been in Melbourne for 15 years. So I know these cities rather well. It probably comes as no surprise that these two cities are great rivals. Having lived in both, I have a balanced view about how these cities compare. In fact, the two cities are very different. They have a different feel about them.

They are both about the same size, although Sydney is slightly larger. In 2011, Sydney had 4.61 million people while Melbourne had 4.17 million.

Sydney is Australia's first city of European settlement. It was founded in 1788 with the arrival of the first Europeans to the eastern side of Australia, which was known as New South Wales. But those who arrived then weren't free settlers, they were convicts and their guards. This is because the first settlement was established by Britain as a place to send convicts from its overflowing prisons. Over time of course, free settlers came as well and Sydney, as the capital of New South Wales, grew.

By contrast, Melbourne was first settled 47 years later in 1835, by free settlers. The town of Melbourne grew and, in

1850, the colony of Victoria was created as a separate colony from New South Wales. That's when the rivalry really began.

An important event for both cities was the start of the gold rushes in the 1850s. The population of Sydney grew quickly with the discovery of gold, however gold discoveries in Victoria in 1851 attracted many people from Sydney to Melbourne. This was when the great rivalry between the two cities grew. In fact, from around 1865, Melbourne overtook Sydney as the largest city in Australia. That's how it stayed until the 1890's when the depression of the 1890's happened. From that time on, Sydney overtook Melbourne as the largest city in Australia and that's how it remains today.

The creation of Australia in 1901 also fuelled the rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne. There was a major question to be answered in the 1890s. Which city would be Australia's new capital? There was much argument at the time. Melbourne was then the largest city, but Sydney was Australia's oldest and first city. Finally a compromise was reached. A new city would be created in New South Wales, but it had to be more than 160 kilometres from Sydney. This was to become Canberra, Australia's new capital. In the meantime, Melbourne became the temporary capital for the new nation while Canberra was built. This lasted until 1927 and you can imagine how this would have further increased the rivalry between the two cities.

I was fortunate to live in Sydney in the early 1990s. I worked in a building right next to Sydney Harbour at Circular Quay. My office was on the 14th floor and it faced the harbour. I could see the sights of Sydney right in front of me, including the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge.



(Photo by Silvia McCormack ©)

There is no doubt that the bridge and Sydney Harbour are beautiful sights. And the unique architecture of the Sydney Opera House is truly amazing.



(Photo by Silvia McCormack ©)

The trip by ferry from Circular Quay to Manly Beach is one I remember fondly from our days in Sydney, as you get the best view of both the Harbour Bridge and the Sydney Opera House. To me, these great sights, and the harbour in particular, somehow capture what Sydney is about. There are things to see in Sydney – the harbour, the beaches, the buildings.

Melbourne, by contrast, is not as beautiful as Sydney, in my opinion. It doesn't have a beautiful harbour, nor an iconic Bridge nor an Opera House. Melbourne does have many good things to see, but I think Melbourne is more about events – things that happen. When I first came to Melbourne, I was impressed by the way people were always talking about sport. Melbourne people are crazy about sport. In the winter, it is Australian Rules Football, with its colourful and exciting Grand Final held at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground in September. Around 100,000 people attend. In the summer it is the Test Cricket, including the famous Boxing Day Test, also held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.



But it's not only these two sports. There is the Australian Tennis Open, the Formula 1 Grand Prix, the MotoGP motorcycle race, the Australian Masters Golf Tournament and the Melbourne Cup Carnival, just to name a few. These things seem to bring Melbourne people together in a way I never experienced in Sydney.

There is one other major sporting difference between the two cities, and it is in their preferred winter sport. In Melbourne, it is Australian Rules Football. In Sydney, it is Rugby League. Both cities are making attempts to bring their sport to the other city. In Melbourne, we now have the Melbourne Storm rugby league team. In Sydney, we now have 2 Australian Rules Football teams, the Sydney Swans and the Greater Western Sydney Giants. But these attempts have not yet changed things. This difference is probably the one big thing which keeps the rivalry between the two cities alive.

Melbourne is regarded as the fashion, arts, cultural and sporting capital of Australia. On the other hand, Sydney is the finance capital. Sydney has the Reserve Bank of Australia and the Australian Stock Exchange. Both cities have had the Olympic Games – Melbourne in 1956 and Sydney in 2000. I should add too, that Sydney did a fantastic job with the Olympics in the year 2000. I took my family and it is a great memory for us all.

On balance, I prefer Melbourne as a place to live. It is a little bit more relaxed and I love the sport. But Sydney is the best place to visit. There are such wonderful things to see. But at the end of the day, it really doesn't matter which city is best. They are both great Australian cities of which I am very proud.

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it by clicking the comments link at the top of this story. You can leave your comment in English or in any language and I will translate it. 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. Perhaps you could suggest a topic for a future podcast. 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 27 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?

You can take the quiz as many times as you like. Individual scores are not recorded.

Start quiz

Vocabulary

amazing = when people find something hard to believe. When something is very, very good.

argument = when people don't agree

arrival = when you come to a place

attempts = when you try to do something

attend = to go to some event

attracted = when you want to go towards something or someone

Australian Stock Exchange = Australia's biggest place to buy shares and stocks in companies

balanced view = when you think about both the good and the bad things

beaches = a sandy area where the sea meets the land

biggest = the largest

capture = to be able to represent something

Carnival = a festival

Circular Quay = a place in Sydney where the ferries stop to pick up people.

colony = an area that is controlled by a foreign country

compare = when you decide if one thing is better or worse than something else

compromise = when two people agree on something. They get some of the things they want, but not all.

convicts = people who are in jail because they have broken the law

creation = when something is made

depression = a period of time when many people lose their money and their job

difference = when two things are not the same

discovery = when something is found

established = when something is first set up or created

European settlement = when Europeans came to live in Australia. Australian Aboriginals were living in Australia for 40,000 years before that.

experienced = when you have done something before

fantastic = when something is very, very good

fashion = the latest clothes designs

finance = the management of money, banking and investments

fondly = when you feel good about something

fortunate = to be lucky

founded = when people first came to live in a place

fuelled = to make something bigger

gold rushes = when everybody goes quickly to a place to find gold. To rush means to go quickly.

Grand Final = the last match in a competition, when the two best teams play

guards = people who stop convicts from escaping

iconic = when something is much loved and respected

imagine = when you think of something in your mind

impressed = when you think something is very good

increased = to get bigger

meantime = when something happens in between two other events.

memory = when you can remember something

overflowing = when things are more than full

overtook = when you get more

population = the total number of people in a place

preferred = when you like one thing more than another thing

prisons = places where you keep convicts. Also called jails.

proud = when you have something which you think is very good.

rather = very

regarded = when people have respect for something

relaxed = when you are not stressed

remains = stays

Reserve Bank of Australia = Australia's central government bank which controls Australia's banking

rivals = when you want to be better than someone else

separate = to be removed

settlers = people who come to live in a place

sights = things you can see

slightly = a little bit

temporary = when something is not there forever

Tournament = a competition

unique architecture = when a building is like no other building