

Podcast 70 – Celebrating New Year's Eve in Australia

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

Podcast Number 70 – Celebrating New Year's Eve in Australia

Hi,

Celebrating the arrival of the New Year is something people do all around the world. In Australia, it comes in the middle of summer, so it's a great time to celebrate something outdoors that happens at midnight. In Australia, like most countries, celebrating the New Year is about having a party and watching great fireworks displays. In this podcast, I would like to tell you a little about how we celebrate the arrival of the New Year in Melbourne.

In 2015, like most years, it was hot in Melbourne on the 31st of December. During the day, the temperature reached around 40 degrees Celsius and we spent most of the day indoors, trying to keep cool. It was a relief when the sun started to go down and the temperature started to drop. This was perfect weather for the New Year's Eve celebration. In Melbourne, people are encouraged to go into the city to celebrate the New Year and watch the fireworks. My wife and I decided to take advantage of the free public transport from 6.00pm, in order to make our way into the city centre. Offering free public transport means there will be fewer people trying to drive their cars into the city, a hassle everyone can do without on New Year's eve.



We caught the bus and had a comfortable trip into the city. Other people caught the train or a tram. Altogether, around half a million people made their way into the city for the celebration. The main places to go were Federation Square, the banks of the Yarra River, the King's Domain, Docklands, Flagstaff Gardens and Treasury Gardens. At many of these there was special entertainment from the early evening, including live bands.

Our city likes to encourage families to come in for the celebration too. To do this, they have a special 'family friendly' fireworks display at 9.30pm, which is a time more suitable for young children. In 2015, this family fireworks was held in Yarra Park which is the large park which surrounds the MCG. We went there first when we arrived in the city and it was also a great experience, with many thousands of families there to enjoy the fun.



It seemed very popular for the children to have a coloured plastic light sabre, just like the one from the Star Wars movie. It was great to look out across the park and see so many Jedi Knights waving their bright light sabres. From early in the evening there were bands and even a big movie screen showing the movie Toy Story. People brought their picnic blankets and relaxed on the grass waiting for the fireworks to start. At 9.30pm on the dot it started.



It was a great show and I found it just as much fun to watch the faces of the small children as the light show exploded above our heads. What an experience it is for a child to see his or her first fireworks display, and it showed on their faces.

Next we moved on to nearby Treasury Gardens where we had decided to watch the main fireworks at midnight. Treasury Gardens is so named because it is next to the Old State Government Treasury Building which was completed in 1862 and was an important government building of the day. It was the place where gold bullion was stored during and after the gold rush in the 1850s.

Treasury Gardens has trees, winding paths but also beautiful grassed areas and some wide open spaces where you can easily see the sky – perfect for watching fireworks. In the gardens there was a music station which was blasting out the latest hits, along with a light show, so there was plenty to see and hear while we waited for midnight to approach.



All the facilities were available, including portable toilets and vans selling coffee and other treats. My wife and I treated ourselves to two freshly made coffees, espresso style of course. After all, this is Melbourne, the coffee capital of Australia.



We sat down on the grass and waited for the fireworks. Close to midnight, people seemed to come from everywhere and we were soon joined by thousands of people, although we still had plenty of room. On the dot at 12.00 midnight, the fireworks started with a bang.



It was very impressive, certainly the best I have ever seen.



It seemed to go on for a long time and it filled the sky above the gardens with what seemed like a million colours, a million

shapes and a million light patterns. It ended finally with a great crescendo of light, colour and sound. Everyone clapped and cheered at the end. What a way to bring in 2016. My wife and I embraced and gave each other a new year's kiss.

With the temperature still in the high 20s and by now very pleasant, we made our way to the bus stop and within 5 minutes had caught the next free bus ride home – a wonderful way to start 2016.

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 70 QUIZ

Start

1 / 10

True or false? - It is usually hot on New Year's Eve in Australia because it is the middle of summer.

True

False

Prev

Next

2 / 10

True or False? - In 2015, the weather was too hot in Melbourne for the New Year's Eve celebration.

True

False

Prev

Next

3 / 10

True or False? - Rob thinks that offering free public transport into Melbourne on New Year's Eve is a good idea.

True

False

Prev

Next

4 / 10

True or False? - The Family friendly fireworks were held inside the MCG.

True

False

Prev

Next

5 / 10

True or False? - At the family friendly fireworks, they showed the Star Wars movie on a big screen.

True

False

Prev

Next

6 / 10

True or False? - Rob and his wife decided to watch the main fireworks in the Treasury Gardens.

True

False

Prev

Next

7 / 10

True or False? - Rob and his wife bought two freshly made Espresso coffees in Treasury Gardens.

True

False

Prev

Next

8 / 10

True or False? - Rob thinks there were too many people at Treasury Gardens when he watched the fireworks at midnight.

True

False

Prev

Next

9 / 10

True or False? - Rob and his wife were a little bored in Treasury Gardens while they waited for the fireworks.

True

False

Prev

Next

10 / 10

True or False? - Rob and his wife were able to quickly catch a bus after the fireworks.

True

False

Prev

See Result

Your score is

The average score is 70%

Vocabulary

approach = comes near

arrival = when somebody or something comes

bands = a group of musicians who play music together

blasting = when something is very loud

capital = the most important

caught = when you have got onto a train, bus, tram.

celebrating = to join with others and be happy about something

Celsius = a way of measuring temperature. Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius

clapped and cheered = the sounds people make when they are excited

comfortable = when something gives comfort

crescendo = when something grows louder and louder

decided = when something is chosen

displays = sights which people look at

embraced = to put your arms around somebody

encourage = when you tell someone they should do something

entertainment = when you are watch something which makes you happy. For example, a film

espresso style = a special way of making coffee

eve = the evening before

experience = when you have done something before

exploded = when something was blown apart into many pieces,

usually with a loud sound

facilities = things which make you more comfortable

filled = when there is a lot of something

fireworks = something which burns or explodes with bright colours

gold bullion = gold bars

hassle = when something causes you trouble or is annoying

hits = songs which are very popular

impressive = when you find something to be very, very good

midnight = 12.00 at night

music station = a machine which plays music, with colourful lights

offering = when you give something to somebody

on the dot = exactly (used when talking about time)

patterns = when lines, dots or spaces look interesting together

picnic blankets = like a large piece of cloth you spread on the ground, often made of wool

plastic = used to make toys and other objects

plenty = lots of

portable = can be easily moved

public = when something is used by everybody, such as public transport

relaxed = when you are not stressed

relief = when something stops which has made you uncomfortable

sabre = a special type of weapon, like a sword

screen = a large area where a film is shown

shapes = how the edge of things look. For example, square and circle are two shapes

so named = is called

suitable = when something fits or is good for somebody

surrounds = to be all around something

take advantage = to accept an offer for something good

treated = when you gave yourself something nice

treats = something which is nice to eat or drink

winding = not going in a straight line

