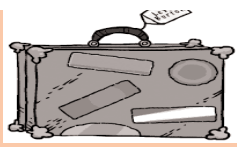


Travel Talk



I was wished a 'happy Mardi Gras' for the first time in my life on Saturday night, and while it has never been on my To Do list, watching a small part of the festival made me realise what a tourist drawcard this has become for Sydney.

People travel from all over the world to be a part of the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and it really is a very happy occasion for those who participate.

We are indeed very lucky to have such a cosmopolitan city in Australia. If you don't want to travel overseas, a few days in Sydney will expose you to just about every culture on the globe.

I also watched my first 3-D movie at Darling Harbour on Saturday night and if you do have the opportunity to see Avatar, make sure it is the 3-D version. I am told too that the newly released 3-D Alice in Wonderland movie is absolutely worth the trip to Sydney.

*** Good news from across the Tasman - Christchurch Airport is doing away with its old-fashioned **departure tax** system from July.

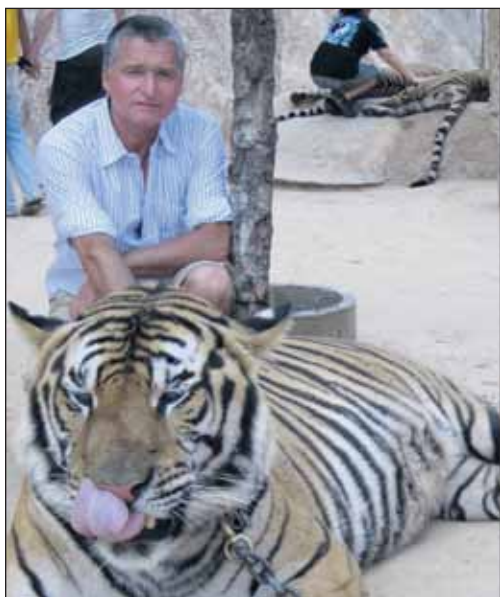
New Zealand is one of the few countries where you still have to fork out departure tax (after you've spent all your money). Most countries include the tax in their airfare, making it easier to budget while on holiday.

I was caught out badly many years ago on a stop-over on Mauritius on my way back from Africa. I had about 60 cents left after paying our taxi fare to the airport, and dropped the few coins in the charity box before walking up to the check-in counter.

It was my most embarrassing moment when I literally could not scrape together the cash to pay for my departure tax.

Luckily Will (who was seven at the time) had been given a wooden drum by a friend in Namibia and he was promptly placed on a chair and told to busk - until we had enough money.

These days credit cards are more widely accepted, but I still do not like having to pay to get out of a country after I have spent all my cash. I hope the rest of New Zealand will follow Christchurch's example.



We have some rather intrepid travellers in our midst - John Laracy pictured with a beautiful Bengal Tiger during his recent family holiday to Thailand.

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A touch of Polynesia hovers over Shear Outback

The girls came out to play last Wednesday night, dressed in grass skirts and adorned with flower leis.

Women About Hay honoured the women of Polynesia at the International Women's Day event, held at Shear Outback.

A delicious Polynesian meal was prepared by Shear Outback chef, Luisa Wells (pictured below) who was born in Samoa.

Right: Claire McFarlane tries her hand at playing the ukulele with the help of Erminia Ruberto (left) and Jenny Honeyman.

Below Jan Hemphill, and Margaret Dodson listen in awe as Marg Tighe strings out some Hawaiian tunes on her ukulele.

Guest speaker on the night was Samoan-born Luisa Wells who also prepared the sumptuous Polynesian meal.



Tui Wells (above) and Lima Canning welcomed guests to Shear Outback.



Harvey Road, Heading north towards town - Isabelle Devos (2009 Finalist)

country scapes 2010

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