



## Walk On the Ocean

Hi Friends and Family,

Thank you for keeping up with our adventures down under. We especially appreciate getting updates back from some of you and just your general good vibes and support.

We have been enviously eyeing summer photos from the northern hemisphere as we are currently in the middle of our first Australian winter. So far, this has been the mildest winter either of us have ever experienced. Still, it is the coldest winter Melbourne

has had in a decade (with temperatures occasionally getting close to freezing overnight).

We are doing a good job of not undermining our Australian acquaintances who complain about the “cold” unless they ask us about our winters back home and then we explain, with great compassion, what winter actually is. Even in this past winter in Madison, one of the warmest on record, there were still eight days with a high temperature colder than any Melbourne has ever experienced.

One big caveat to the mild winter is that home interiors here typically have almost no insulation, so it can be uncomfortable and potentially unsafe inside when things are colder than usual. This is especially true for lower-income people who can't afford supplementary heaters or pay to run them as much as needed. So far our lowest recorded interior temperature is 11 degrees Celsius, which most of you will know as 52 degrees Fahrenheit.



We heat our living room with only a fireplace!

It should also be noted that Melbourne is at the southern end of continental Australia (which is like being in the north in the northern hemisphere), so it's cooler here than most of Australia. The equivalent place in the U.S. would be the southern end of Illinois and Indiana. About two hours north of Melbourne is the Victorian high country, which sees a lot of snow in winter and is known for its skiing and winter sports.

One nice thing about living in a drafty home is that it encourages you to get off the couch. Now that Matt's

able to walk, we've enjoyed getting to know more of our new city.

Highlights include:

- Going to Lightscape at the [Royal Botanic Gardens](#), which allows you to view light displays in the garden while also drinking mulled wine.



I promise we weren't hallucinating this





So many selfies taken in this one



- Attending a small comedy show at the Butterfly Club, which is tiny with a whimsical bar.



Emily enjoying what is clearly apple juice



- [illegible]

Which is your favorite translation of “poop”? Matt likes “POEP” or specifying “soft unko”.



Pictured: a popular Melbourne first date spot

- Hopping on a regional train for a day trip to [Ballarat](#), which is about 90 minutes from Melbourne and full of shops, museums, and historic buildings. (Ballarat was the heart of the [Australian gold rush](#), which started in the 1850s and fed into Melbourne's massive growth in the late 19th Century. Ballarat's gold fields also hosted the [Eureka Rebellion](#), which was a foundational moment for the future Australian Federation.).





An artist made a VW Beetle into a sphere!

- Sports (read the Matt Minute for more)
- Visiting the Melbourne Zoo with Matt's work and seeing our first **JOEY!!!!**



[Joeeeyy Baayybeey....](#)

## **Bits and Bobs:**

### **Pupdates:**

Unfortunately, we've had some frustrating news on the dog front. The charter flight we planned to use to take the dogs to Australia has fallen through. It is unclear if there will be another charter option in the near future, so we aren't sure when and how we'll be able to transport the dogs to Australia. The dogs are permitted to enter Australia through February 26, so please keep your paws crossed that we'll find a safe option before then.

Matt's parents have generously agreed to look after both dogs until we can find a transportation option for

them. **So if you see Barb and Tom, please tell them that they are awesome.** But the good news is...

- Even though we're not bringing the dogs to Australia, **we are still coming home to Madison next week!** We'll be in Madison roughly Aug. 15-23 followed by a visit to Mishawaka, IN to visit Matt's family from 23-26 of Aug. We are coordinating a casual, small gathering for Madison folks on the evening of **Friday, Aug. 16** at our friend Nathaniel's house. If you are available and want to attend, send us an email for details.
- **Emily is learning to spin her own yarn** with the [Handweavers and Spinners Guild of Victoria](#), which is conveniently located a few blocks from our house. This means that Emily has learned to separate yarn from a sheep's fleece, prepare it through flicking or carding, and then use a spinning wheel to spin and ply yarn suitable for knitting. It's all very Little House in the Australian Big City.



Preparing for the apocalypse...

- In more Laura Ingalls Winecke news, **Emily also knitted another sweater and a chic hat** and attended the [Australia Sheep and Wool Show](#), the largest wool show in the Southern Hemisphere, possibly the world.

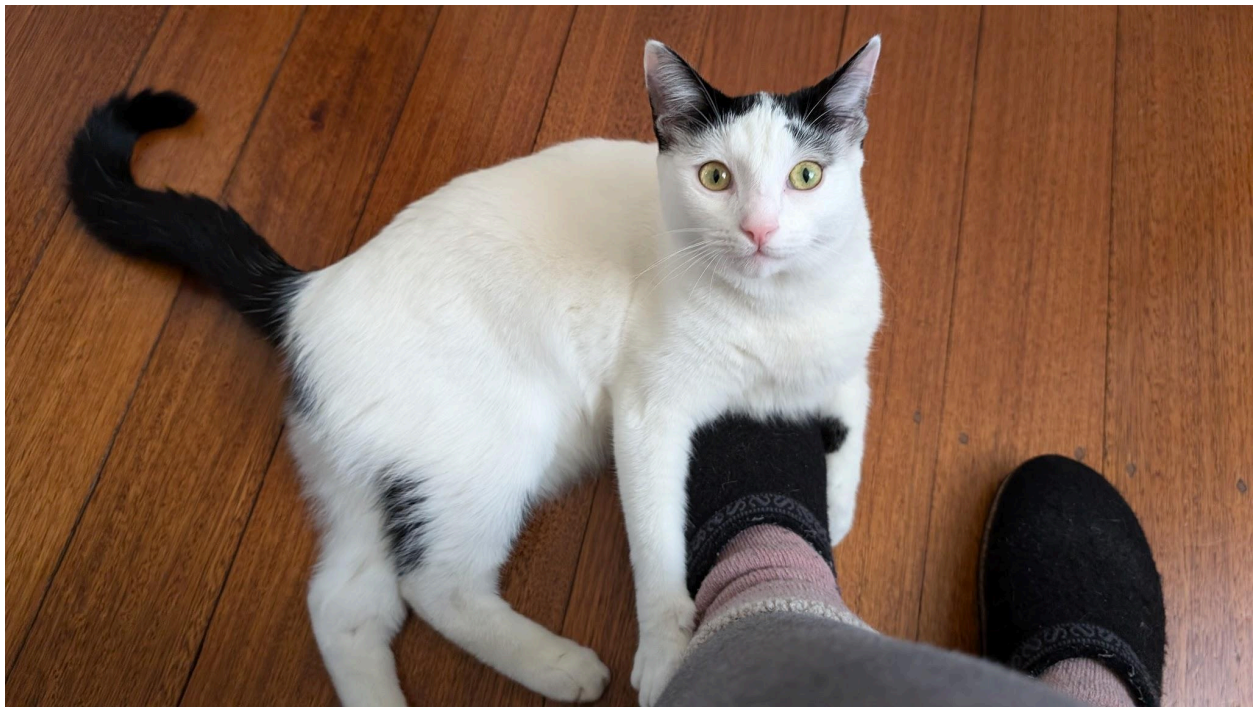




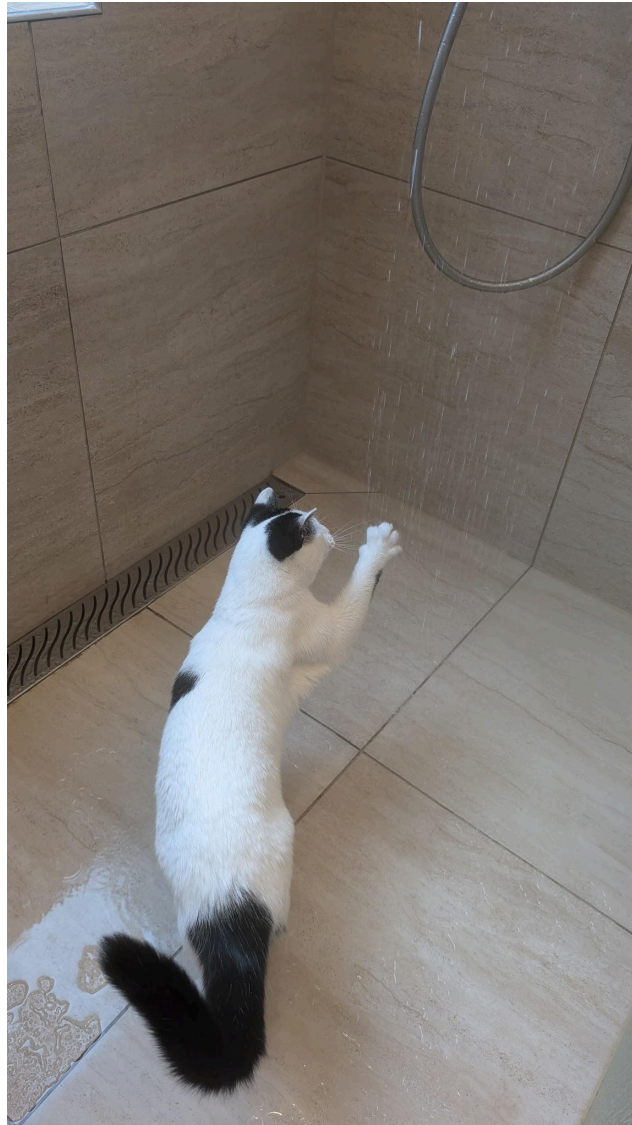
Sweater pattern: [Wave Sweater](#) by Spektakelstrik. Hat pattern: [Springbreeze Beanie](#) by Asha Arun. Fiber artist: Emily Winecke

- Matt is reading books again! He had done his reading on (well-regarded) blogs and websites and (less-well-regarded) social media sites. He finished [Priestdaddy by Patricia Lockwood](#), who was also an excellent Twitter-er (that's where he found her first). He finds it nice to not look at a screen sometimes.

- **Captain Robert Kangaroo** [is on Instagram!](#) Start following him to get regular updates from your favorite Australian cat (someone, get Emily a job!).
  - Because one of our readers asked: **yes, we are planning to bring Cappy back to the U.S.** when we're done with Matt's assignment. One of the reasons we thought he would be a good fit for our family was because he's brave and adventurous, so we're hoping he'll do okay on the flight home.



How could we leave this face behind?



Matt said to add an adventure shot

- Things we've learned about Cappy in the last few weeks:
  - He likes to be in the bathroom with us while we shower to soak up steam, chase his tail, and then stare at us while we bathe.
  - He carries his toys up to our bedroom throughout the night and makes sure we carry them back down for play during the day.



- He chirps when we turn on his laser pointer.
- He eats french fries, yogurt, slices of meat and cheese.



# The Matt Minute

## The Sports! Edition

The Olympics has started! Australia goes crazy for the Summer Olympics (the superior Olympics). Most of their strongest events in the Olympics are solo or small team sports - swimming, surfing, cycling, rowing, sailing, etc. While Australia does love some of the same team sports that we do in America, like soccer and



basketball, many of their most popular team sports are niche sports in America (if they are played at all). They have very good field hockey, cricket, and rugby teams, as well as the two sports I'll talk about below: [Australian Rules Football](#) and [Netball](#).

Australian rules football (usually called “footy” or “aussie rules”) is the most popular sport in Australia. In fact, the Australian Football League (AFL) is the most-attended domestic sporting league in the world per capita.

League	Country	Attendance	Population	Attendees per capita
AFL	Australia	8,100,000	26,000,000	0.31
MLB	U.S.A.	70,700,000	333,000,000	0.21
NBA	U.S.A.	22,500,000	333,000,000	0.07
NFL	U.S.A.	18,900,000	333,000,000	0.06
EPL	U.K.	15,000,000	67,000,000	0.22

Footy is similar to rugby and soccer and not very similar to American football. Watching footy is a chaotic experience - fast-paced, messy, and the ball doesn't stay in one place for very long. It seems like [Yackety Sax](#) should be playing in the background while it's going on.

- The goal is to kick the ball through a set of posts. You get six points if the ball is kicked through the middle posts and one point if it is kicked through either of the sides.



- Players can advance the ball by kicking it, punching it with their hand, or running with it (they need to dribble every so often, though).
- The opponents try to tackle them or intercept the ball. When this happens, play might stop for a few seconds, but almost always starts right back up.
- If a player catches a ball kicked from more than 15 meters away (around 50 feet), play stops and that

player gets a free kick. This is how most goals are scored though some are kicked through on the run.

All of this means that the ball is bouncing on the ground a lot with players hitting each other. Pretty chaotic overall.



A few of the greatest “marks” in the AFL to get a free kick afterward





They actually practice jumping off of other players' backs to get higher

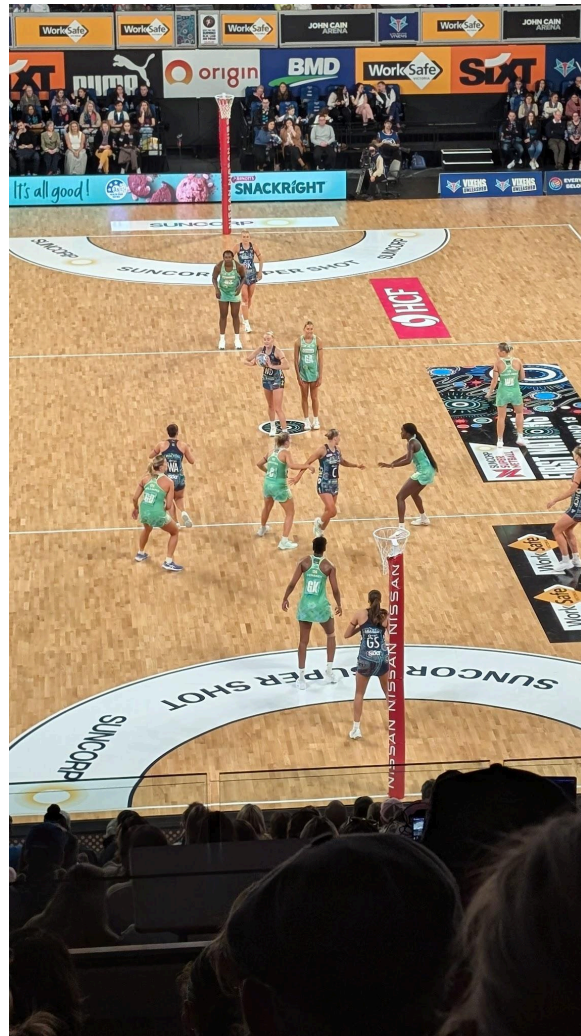




Also pictured: mullets and mustaches are popular here

Netball is kind of a cross between basketball and ultimate frisbee. It looks like basketball, but there is no backboard, players cannot dribble, defenders must stand a meter away from the player with the ball, and players are restricted to where they can go. It was originally developed to be a game that players of many different abilities and skill levels can compete in and enjoy.

We recently attended a professional netball game. There is only a professional women's league but men and women play recreationally (often together!).



We only attend games in the very highest rows

Offensive and defensive players can only be in their third of the court and midfielders can go anywhere. All of the shooting and scoring happens in the semi-circle around the hoop and each made shot is worth one point, except for in the last five minutes, when shots from the white arch are worth two points.

While the game is designed to be fair for many players, the game we went to had one player who was way better than anyone else, [Jhaniele Fowler-Nembhard](#).

She has won the “Player of the Year” award for the last seven years! Watching her was like watching Shaq in his prime - [she’s just too big and no one can stop her!](#)

That’s it for me this newsletter!



## Meet Our House!

A few of you expressed interest in getting a taste of where we’re living. This newsletter is already very wordy, so we decided to give you a tour of our house over two videos. Enjoy!

[House Tour Part 1](#)

[House Tour Part 2](#)

Have questions about the house or other questions about Australia? **Submit your thoughts and questions to the [Pouch Post](#)!** (Thanks to everyone who’s submitted content ideas...those will hopefully bare fruit at some point in the future!)





**For those who are comfortable, we may share your responses in upcoming newsletters.**



# **We Drove the Great Ocean Road So You Don't Have To**

## **(But you should probably want to)**

Melbourne is blessed with many things (friendly people, great cultural institutions, excellent restaurants, cute trams), but it's not known for "bucket list" tourist destinations, like, say, the Sydney Opera House. But just outside of Melbourne is a gorgeous stretch of coastline known as [The Great Ocean Road](#), which may not be as famous as The Great Barrier Reef, but is certainly worthy of your bucket list, or at least your list of things to do when you visit us.

Stretching 150 miles along the southern coast of Australia, The Great Ocean Road (GOR) begins in **Torquay**, which is about 80 miles southwest of Melbourne. We decided to spend about four days driving along the GOR over the public holiday weekend honoring the monarch's birthday (this takes place in June every year, regardless of when the current monarch has their actual birthday. Also, we have a monarch now...).

(If the email truncates here, click the link below that says “view entire message” to read the full newsletter).



Help! Our king is covered in strawberry jam and has lost his butterfly!

What follows are some of the highlights from our short trip along the Southern/Antarctic Ocean. On multiple occasions during our trip, we said to each other **how much we looked forward to bringing visitors on this trip** and seeing more of the region (hint, hint). To get a sense of the many things to do/see in this part of Australia, the Great Ocean Road tourism site has [several itineraries](#) to shape around your interests.



## Day 1:

We left Melbourne mid-morning and drove to [Torquay](#) for lunch. Torquay is a touristy seaside town of about 18,000 people. We were in a hurry to get to the ocean part of our journey so we didn't linger in Torquay. Reported highlights we skipped were [taking surfing lessons](#) and visiting [the Australian National Surfing Museum](#).

Surf culture is celebrated so highly in Torquay due to the draw of nearby surf beaches, most famously Bells Beach. Its legendary surf beaches led to several big surf businesses starting in Torquay including [Quicksilver](#) and [Rip Curl](#).



Bells Beach



Person surfing!

We spent a good chunk of time watching surfers at Bells Beach and its attached sister beach overlook, Winkipop. From there we drove down the coast towards **Anglesea**, stopping at the [Great Ocean Road Chocalaterie & Ice Creamery](#), where we were immediately overwhelmed by the multitude of dessert options.





The Chocolaterie's large store is also accompanied by a cafeteria built for busloads of tourists stopping to sample brownies, ice cream, drinking chocolate, and other combinations of sweets. We eventually got a brownie sampling tray and hot chocolates. It was all pretty good, but (and I can't believe I'm typing this) it was A LOT.





The Chocolaterie “desserted” us under the table (even Matt!).  
Not pictured in this photo were the two hot chocolates we  
also ordered.

We worked off a bit of our chocolate stupor by visiting [Anglesea's golf course](#), which is famous for its mob of kangaroos. One can even take a short **kangaroo tour**, for which we gleefully gave away our money. Even though the tours were done for the day, the nice tour guide gave us one anyway.



On the kangaroo tour, we learned:

- Joeys are teeny-tiny when they are born into their mom's pouch, so they won't poke out of the pouch for about four months after their birth. After that, they'll go in and out of the pouch for the next several months.
- Kangaroo moms can hold off the gestational development of a joey due to resource limitations such as [a drought or if she is caring for another joey.](#)
- Joeys generally emerge from pouches in mid-winter (we saw a number of full pouches on the tour, but no joeys yet) and in mid-summer.



## Day 2:

We departed from our hotel in [Aireys Inlet](#), which is a smaller town about 30 km from Torquay, and made our way to lovely [Lorne](#) for breakfast. There we watched dogs frolic off-leash on a dog beach and wondered what the real estate situation was like in Lorne (not too bad!).

We made a brief pitstop at **Kennett River** for an unsuccessful attempt to view koalas near the [Koala Cafe](#). This is a very popular place to stop and there were at least two busloads of tourists also looking for koalas when we were there. Later, we saw a koala just hanging out by the side of the road.



This is not the stretch of road where we saw the koala, but a photo Emily took and wanted to show off.



Because we prioritized ocean viewing on this trip we drove through [Great Otway National Park](#) and skipped a number of highly regarded sights and activities that we hope to eventually go back and experience. These included:

- [Wildlife Wonders](#), a sanctuary for native flora and fauna
- [Otway Fly Treetop Adventure](#)
- [Cape Otway Lightstation](#)

Those highlights were skipped so we could spend more time up the road in [Port Cambell National Park](#) with its jaw-dropping rock formations known as the 12 Apostles.



Matt, Emily, and some Apostles (we're guessing Andrew, James, Bartholomew).





Not pictured in any of the photos: Judas

For reasons that should be obvious, this is a very popular tourist destination with a large car park, a newly updated and huge viewing platform (without

knowing it, we were there on the platform's opening day), and loads of people trying to get beautiful photos. It is possible to drive down to this area on a long day trip from Melbourne (and many tourists on tight schedules do this). It is also possible to extend one's time in the park with scenic walks along the ocean and its cliffs (we didn't do this because of Matt's ankle). There are also several other rock formations one can stop and see near these more famous formations.

### **Day 3:**

We set off early on day three with the goal of watching as many animals as possible. Winter is the peak [whale watching season](#) along the southern coast of Australia, with sightings beginning in late May. We continued west along the coast to [Warrnambool](#), which even has a dedicated whale-watching platform.





Whale-watching platform outside of Warrnambool

Although it is possible to see humpbacks, southern right whales, and even blue whales along the Great Ocean Road, we didn't see any whales during our visit. Fortunately, the next animals on our itinerary were a little more forthcoming, albeit much smaller...



We headed to [Port Fairy](#) (about 20 minutes west of Warrnambool) for its annual [Dachshund Dash](#). Although delightful in its own right, this is a big deal for the local community with multiple heats, local sponsors, and color commentary on the sidelines.





Waiting for the weiner

After we had enough doses of dachshund we headed back east towards our accommodation in [Port Campbell](#), a villa/luxury cabin-type place called [Anchors](#). We loved our stay here and would highly recommend it for those wanting something private and a little posh at the same time.



One of the more surprising features of our GOR drive was how familiar it felt. The coastlines were otherworldly, but when we were just a little inland we kept wondering if we had somehow wandered back to Wisconsin or Northwest Iowa where Matt grew up. This part of Victoria is a major dairy producer and that was evident by many small herds of dairy cows we saw imbedded in green, rolling hills.



Victoria or Wisconsin?



We knew we weren't in Wisconsin because this place WASN'T OPEN ON  
THE WEEKEND.

The dairy farms were broken up by small settlements along the highway generally with a general store, bar, and maybe a gas pump/auto shop. Perhaps the winter made it all appear quieter and more midwestern, but it was a small delight to feel connected to home even when on the other side of the world.



Iowa or Victoria? (Driving on the left is probably a clue)

## **Day 4**

The next morning we woke up early and drove home through forested fog and made it back to Melbourne in the early afternoon.





We were both pretty exhausted so didn't linger too much along the road and decided to drive the shorter interior route back to Melbourne. We stopped for fudge early in the morning and then made our way to **Colac** for a lovely lunch at the [Lake View Cafe](#).



This monstrous carbohydrate is rumored to be a scone.



# Until Next Time...

Here are pictures of Australian animals in snow:





Wombat in the snow. (Photo by [Ken Duncan](#))





Tasmanian Devil in the snow (Photo by [Aussie Ark](#))



Kangaroo in snow (Photo by [Charles Davis Photography](#))

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