

Episode 96: Sydney

Summary

Our guest, Nick's father Geoff, is back to talk about his home town of Sydney, Australia. He talks about Sydney's harbour, beaches and beauty.

Transcript

Nick: Today I'm talking once again to my father Geoff. And, Dad, last time we talked about Australia in general. And now we're going to talk about Sydney, which is the city that you were born and bred in and that I was not quite born in but was bred in and lived in the first eighteen years of my life. So, Sydney. What's it like?

Geoff: Biased¹ view.

Nick: Of course.

Geoff: A very lovely place. Umm, it seems to have everything. Uhh, it has beautiful beaches, it has a magnificent harbour, so described several hundred years ago by various explorers. Uhh, it has two world-recognised buildings or structures, if you like, within shouting distance of² each other. And that's quite a sight to see from land or from the harbour.

Nick: And so those two are, of course, the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Sydney Opera House.

Geoff: You got it.

Nick: And, so, yeah, you can see them both in the same view depending on where you are. And, yeah, those are really the symbols of the city.

Geoff: They are, they are. And I think particularly the addition of the Opera House, which is now, umm, getting a little bit old, about as old as your eldest brother (Tim), who, uhh ... and it was opened on or nearby the day that he was born. And I think the addition of that complements³ the Harbour Bridge, and you don't know which way to look. They're both spectacular.

¹ biased: not impartial or objective (because Sydney is Geoff's home city, he has a subjective view)

² within shouting distance of: very close to

³ complements: completes, goes well with

Nick: Yeah, so that just forms part of this setting of the harbour, like you said. I remember once, I don't know if you remember this, we were in ... uhh, listening to the radio once, in a car, and I was about sixteen or seventeen, and the guy on the radio just said some throwaway line⁴, like, you know, 'We're in the world's most beautiful city,' or something like that. And I hadn't travelled anywhere else, and so I said to you, 'Is that really true?' And you said, 'I think it's up there.' And now, many years later, I can say that it is up there. I think looking at location, it's very similar to a place like San Francisco, which also has a famous bridge and a famous bay area or a famous harbour. Umm, and I think Rio de Janeiro and Cape Town are the two cities for me that have this incredible location because they have mountains as well. But Sydney is absolutely beautiful with all the little bays and all of that.

Geoff: It is. A trip on the harbour, even a commuter trip⁵ between Manly, which, uhh, listeners may have heard of, one of the famous beaches of the northern part of Sydney. A commuter trip between Manly and the city is ... it takes about half an hour, and that in itself is worthwhile doing. Uhh, in the early part of the journey from Manly, uhh, you pass the heads, which is the only entrance, of course, to Sydney harbour. And that is also a magnificent sight. And generally when you're travelling from Manly to Sydney, you will pass by a couple of cruise ships which are on their way in or on their way out. And just to do that is, uhh, is amazing.

Nick: Yeah, it's funny because often when you're in a city with a river or a waterway like that, yeah, you might think you need to take a tourist boat or something like that to experience it, but this Manly ferry is one of the ... probably one of the great public transportation trips in the world that there is.

Geoff: Has to be, has to be. It has a long history. Umm, there are ... it has had a succession of⁶ ferries, many of which are of course now out of service and replaced by modern ones. But there's a strong core of fanatics who will still try to be restoring the old ferries and even wishing that they could get back out on the harbour. Umm, there are also many other commuter routes on the harbour, usually run on smaller ferries. And they can be a short journey, but once again, just ... and some of them will go under the Harbour Bridge, and that's quite a sight as well.

Nick: Yeah, when I was a teenager they introduced what they call the JetCat, which was a fast boat, doing the same route, from Manly to Circular Quay, which is the area in between the Opera House and the Harbour Bridge. And so it's twice as quick. It takes, I think, fourteen minutes on the JetCat and twenty-eight or thirty on the ferry. But everybody just prefers the ferry, umm, because it's such an old boat and it's such a nice journey, even though it takes twice as long.

Geoff: Well, that's certainly the case. It may also have something to do with the fact that the, uhh, JetCat is about twice the price. Umm...

⁴ throwaway line: something said without much thought or that doesn't mean much

⁵ commuter trip: public transport trip to or from work

⁶ a succession of: many, over the course of time

Nick: Well, twice as quick, twice the price.

Geoff: Well, certainly for some businesspeople who are late for work or, umm, just in the normal hustle and bustle, they just want to get things done quickly, they would certainly take the JetCat. And it's been going for a very long time, so it's obviously well supported as well as the ferries. But to see the ferry come into Manly, umm, on a summer's weekend, absolutely packed with beach-goers who will then get off the ferry and walk down a, uhh, non-vehicle avenue called the Corso in Manly. And within several hundred metres, not very far, they'll be at one of the iconic beaches of Sydney. The other one people will know of and maybe have heard of a little bit more is Bondi, which is in the eastern part of the city, uhh, on the other side of the harbour from Manly. Personally, I prefer Manly, but I may be biased because I was born and bred on the Northern Beaches of Sydney and Manly is part of that.

Nick: Right, so Manly is the most famous of these beaches. It's, I guess, the southern-most of them, I suppose, or it's where the Northern Beaches begins, really. And then essentially every suburb going north has its own beach.

Geoff: That's exactly right. It actually ends, that part of Sydney actually ends in a very narrow peninsula and the northern tip of that peninsula is Palm Beach, which is, uhh, often home to the, uhh, rich and famous and attracts huge rents over the Christmas holiday period and a lot of overseas celebrities, movie stars and people like that will come and pay thousands and thousands of dollars per week, umm, to live for a few weeks in a little bit of paradise.

Nick: Yep, and so this is obviously the area where we're from, umm, and so some of the other beaches that are a little bit famous are, well, Narrabeen, for one, because it was in the Beach Boys' song, *Surfin' USA*.

Geoff: That's exactly right.

Nick: And that's actually where you live now.

Geoff: That's where we live, that's where we live. We live about a hundred and fifty metres, I guess, from the beach. It's quite a long beach and has three recognised, umm, swimming areas, which are patrolled by lifesavers⁷ and have their own clubhouses. Uhh, just at the end of our street, there is no, umm, lifesavers and, uhh, but it's still a nice place to walk. And, uhh, yeah so it's famous, and the North Narrabeen surfing break is famous with the surfers around the world, because it's a pretty good surfing break.

⁷ lifesavers (also: lifeguards): people whose job is to watch over swimmers at the beach and rescue them if they get in trouble

Nick: And so, you know, Australia in general and Sydney in particular, it's such a beach culture and so it's just amazing to have all these beaches so accessible to everybody and that's what people do on their weekends in Sydney.

Geoff: That's what people do on their weekends in Sydney, and why wouldn't you?

Nick: Why wouldn't you, indeed? Umm, some people like to call the peninsula that you referred to as the 'insular peninsula'.

Geoff: I think I was waiting for that one.

Nick: Umm, which means that people who are from there don't like to venture⁸ to other parts of the city because they're very happy to just stay where they are. But Sydney is just a huge city geographically. In terms of population, it only has - what? - about four million people or so.

Geoff: Perhaps four-and-a-half now, yeah.

Nick: But that's spread out over a very large area. Because it's a new world place, people tend to live in houses rather than apartments and so there's just a massive spread. If you drove from the northern tip, Palm Beach, that you mentioned, all the way to the southern tip, that would take a couple of hours, wouldn't it?

Geoff: Well, an hour-and-a-half. Certainly an hour-and-a-half, and also out to the western areas as well, which, Sydney's really ... the sprawl⁹ has actually stopped in the west by the mountain range, the Blue Mountains as they're known. But, yes, it is a big place, and therefore a lot of people living out in the west perhaps don't enjoy that everyday beach culture that we have because it's a fair way in to do it. But it's still there, it's still accessible to them.

Nick: Yep. And so of the inner city areas, what are the ones that stand out for you?

Geoff: Well the most famous one is the one right in the city, umm, the original settlement in Sydney Cove, which is called The Rocks. And a lot of the old buildings - and old is of course a relative term when you come over to Europe like I am at the moment, and you see, uhh, cities which are hundreds and hundreds and thousands of years older than Sydney. But The Rocks is very good, they have preserved it very well. There was a chance, a number of years ago, that they were going to redevelop a lot of it, and a lot of the old buildings were going to be, umm, cast aside¹⁰. But there was a big movement against that, and it's been preserved, and thankfully so. Uhh, there are other areas, close, not right in the Sydney, but Surry Hills, umm, those sort of areas, very restaurant-orientated. Umm, lots of different ... every different type of restaurant you can imagine from every different

⁸ to venture: to journey, to go far

⁹ sprawl: spread of buildings to outer parts of cities

¹⁰ cast aside: torn down (in this case), rejected, thrown away, discarded (in general)

part of the world. You can go there and walk up and down. Umm, they're quite ... and they're different from the beach-sided suburbs. They are smaller streets, uhh, a little bit more tightly packed housing, uhh, not so many big backyards or big front yards, and they're very interesting as well.

Nick: Alright, well thank you for telling us about Sydney.

Geoff: Pleasure.

Comprehension Questions

1. According to Nick and Geoff, what's a good way to experience Sydney harbour?
2. According to Geoff, what type of people stay at Palm Beach in the north of Sydney during the holidays?
3. Why is the Northern Beaches of Sydney referred to as in the 'insular peninsula'?

Exercises

Use the words and expressions in the footnotes of the transcript to fill in the gaps.

1. You shouldn't go swimming in the ocean unless there are _____ patrolling the beach. Otherwise, if you get caught in a rip, there'll be no one to help you.
2. They were neighbours when they were children and now they've bought houses _____ each other. What a coincidence!
3. The radio host said something offensive as a _____ when he wasn't really thinking properly, and then it became a big controversy and he was sacked.
4. At Carnaval in Rio de Janeiro, _____ floats go through the streets, one after the other. There are so many of them!
5. More people live in cities than in rural areas for the first time in history. That means that the urban _____ in many cities just gets bigger and bigger.
6. She has to take the bus over the Sydney Harbour Bridge to go to work every morning. For a _____, that's not a bad sight!
7. He thinks France is the best country in the world. Of course, he's French, so he's pretty _____.
8. She was a shy child, so she stayed home and read a lot of books and didn't like _____ outside much to play with other kids.
9. As soon as the corporate takeover was complete, the new bosses decided to _____ the previous CEO of the company that had been bought out. He got a nice severance package but soon he'll need to look for another job.
10. Some people think that the Louvre pyramid perfectly _____ the Louvre. Others disagree and think it's an eyesore.

Discussion Questions

Discuss these questions with a partner or in the [English in 10 Minutes Listeners group on Facebook](#):

1. Have you ever been to Sydney? If so, did you like it? If not, would you like to go? Why or why not?
2. Nick said that the Manly ferry was one of the best public transport trips in the world. Can you think of any others that are particularly memorable?
3. Geoff described Sydney as a city with magnificent beaches. Which other cities have you been to with great beaches in the city itself?

Answers

Comprehension Questions

1. Taking the Manly ferry from Manly to the city.
2. The rich and famous, including movie stars.
3. Because the people who live there tend to stay in that area and not go to other parts of Sydney very often.

Exercises

1. lifesavers
2. within shouting distance of
3. throwaway line
4. a succession of
5. sprawl
6. commuter trip
7. biased
8. to venture
9. cast aside
10. complements