



**A British tourist recently got lost hiking — not once, but twice within one week — in the desert near Alice Springs and both times spent days wandering around in circles without water or shelter.**

**To prevent similar regrettable incidents, and the consequent strain on the emergency services, The Gate offers Tourism Australia some suggestions for an information pack to provide basic orientation to visitors from the Old Dart.**

**Q: (Tourist): What is the first thing I should know about Australia?**

A: The large red thing in the middle of Australia is called a desert. It is very hot and dry. If you walk out there wearing only shorts and a handkerchief on your head, we advise that you may suffer a serious health malfunction.



**Q: What should I do if I do get lost?**

A: To alert rescue services, put on a candy-coloured bikini, smile, and call out: "Where the bloody hell are you?" If you are within range, a tourism operative will approach you, check your condition and your 100 points of identification, and escort you to a Fluid Replenishment Centre.

**Q: Is fluid replenishment important in Australia?**

A: Fluid replenishment is crucial in Australia. Not just in the desert, either. In fact, all over Australia, the majority of citizens spend hours every day engaging in fluid replenishment.

**Q: I hear that Australia is home to a lot of dangerous animals. What is the most dangerous animal in Australia?**

A: Opinions vary, but people who drive Volvos while wearing a hat rate fairly highly.

**Q: I see. What should I do if I get bitten by a snake?**

A: We advise you to write a brief note in black or blue ink (pencil not acceptable) donating your organs to medical science, and describing as accurately as possible the encounter with the snake, so that it can be correctly treated by the Wildlife Service, if necessary.

**Q: Is it correct that Australia is in the southern hemisphere? How might this affect my navigation?**

A: You are clearly an intelligent and well-informed individual to have picked out the key point —

Australia is in the southern hemisphere. Navigation does not change significantly — for example, we advise that you should not turn your map upside down, or you might find yourself suffering a location malfunction.

**Q: After I have been rescued from the desert, I plan to go to the seaside. How should I go about this?**

A: Australia is an island, so the sea is all around you. It's probably quite a long way, so you might want to abandon the idea of strolling there with a packed lunch, and invest instead in one of our affordable tours.

**Q: How about the sea? Are sea creatures in Australia safe to swim with?**

A: You obviously haven't been reading the newspapers recently.

**Q: My local travel agent says that Sydney is a wonderful place to visit. Should I book a tour there?**

A: Why not? Just ensure that your travel agent understands the difference between Sydney, Australia and Sydney, Nova Scotia. You should be able to tell the difference from the brochures — the creatures basking on Nova Scotia beaches are elephant seals, which is not the case in Australia.

**Q: I hear a lot about Australian values. What are they?**

A: Australian values are very good.

**Q: What I mean is, how do they affect me as a tourist?**

A: It is quite simple. When applying for your visa, you should fill out an Australian Values Pledge Form.

**Q: How will I recognise this form?**

A: The StrineVal01 form, available at your local High Commission, has a distinctive meat-pie gravy stain in the top right-hand corner and a hot tip for the 3.30 at Randwick pencilled in at the left margin. Please be advised, we support responsible gambling.

**Q: Is this a difficult form to complete?**

A: No, we need the tourists. There is a simple 'Find the Word' puzzle, a drawing competition called "What Shape Is the Footy?" and a typically Australian crossword. By the way, the answer to 1 Across, "Large Flightless Bird (3)" is "emu".

**Q: Thank you. Finally, I hear that Australians are very friendly. Is this true?**

A: Yes. As an English tourist, you are an especially honoured guest. Within a few minutes of opening a conversation, all Australians will freely offer you honest opinions on your ancestry, personal hygiene and level of intelligence.

**David Legard**

