

Good Day Mates,

I am just back from 9 amazing days down under in Australia and I have to say, if you have ever thought of traveling there (and honestly, who hasn't) attending the IARPP conference next May, 2017 is surely the best time to do it. It is a beautiful country, with lovely people, and the weather will be very nice in Sydney that time of year. As a special bonus, for many of you, your trip will represent a dandy business tax write off helping defray this extraordinary vacation opportunity as a great educational experience and expense.

On this most recent trip (I was in Sydney presenting in October 2014) I had the great fortune of once again being invited by IARPP Australia, our Australian IARPP chapter. Presenting first in Melbourne on Saturday the 21st and then in Sydney on the 22nd, I had a full day in each city which gave us plenty of time to ponder relational psychoanalysis' enormous contribution to the evolution of psychoanalysis. I have never spoken to more receptive and eager audiences. It is abundantly clear that they are very excited about hearing from other relational analysts from all over the world.

I have come to learn that Australian psychoanalysts' training and analytic perspective is largely traditional and pretty conservative. In some circles (like other places in the world including the USA) there is downright suspicion of contemporary theory in psychoanalysis, especially relational. Having heard that ample times about Australia, I was profoundly struck by the audiences to whom I spoke in that they could not have been more receptive and excited. If we are bringing them the "plague" as Freud noted upon arriving in the USA in 1905 for the Clark University lectures, they are happy to become infected. What does all this mean? Simply that there will seldom be a better time to present at an IARPP conference like this one. And don't worry that your submission has to meet the

specific theme of the conference. The Aussies are incredibly open minded and interested in hearing anything that is, well, interesting!

Now if you have ever wondered what Australia is like, here's a few tidbits that will hopefully stir your wanderlust imaginings. For starters, Australia is huge! In square miles pretty close to the size of the continental USA - the "lower 48" as we Yanks say. But in terms of population its quite small (24,360,174), with about 90% living up and down the eastern seaboard of Australia. (4.92 million in Sydney alone). What remains of the rest is pretty much waaaay out west in the southwest part of the continent in an area surrounding Perth, where, BTW, some of the best New World wine is currently made (more on that momentarily). What's in between? Pretty much dry hot desert.

That's right. Imagine the USA with a robust (green) Eastern seaboard which heading west then rapidly turns into desert ALL ACROSS the country pretty much as far north and south as you can go. Until, that is, you got to the West Coast of the United States, where there would be a patch of green, again pretty much along the Southern California seaboard. Sort of like the greater Los Angeles area and then up and down between Santa Barbara and San Diego.

Although some adventurers may want to head into the Outback to Ayers Rock – that extraordinary mesa-like rock formation in the middle of flat desert (you'll have to fly) - most of your travel will likely be on the eastern side of the country. No worries, it's beautiful!

This trip I was in Melbourne, Sydney, and then flew way up north to Port Douglas close to the top of the North Queensland peninsula. Port Douglas is also a launching point to visit the Great Barrier Reef, where I went scuba diving, a sort of bucket list item for me. It's also a couple of hours from the Daintree Rainforest that abuts the ocean to the north and is both primitive and gorgeous.

Now when you are in Sydney next May you will be at roughly 32 degrees south of the Equator. Parenthetically, Santiago Chile is also about 32 degrees south of the Equator. So what's the weather like? Well, in May in Sydney (which is their late Fall bordering on the commencement of their Winter) the temperature is very much like Los Angeles is in November. That's because LA is also 32 degrees from the Equator, only North. And as hopefully many of you already know, weather in November in LA is quite nice. At 32 degrees, both North and South of the Equator, the heat of the summer and early fall are long gone and now it's lovely and cool. Never really too cold, mostly divine.

Travelling north to Port Douglas up in the peninsula of North Queensland is like leaving LA and flying south to Cabo San Lucas in Baja Mexico. Both Port Douglas and Cabo are approximately the same degrees of latitude relative to the Equator, meaning both are tropical year round. In Port Douglas this past week, it was in the 80's and humid, but comfortable. The month of May should be lovely as well, and an excellent time to go, since summer, both 32 degrees north and south of the Equator can be pretty brutal between tropical heat and humidity. So while you are at the IARPP conference, it can be a good time to travel north if so inclined.

Having now been up and down Australia's eastern seaboard, I can testify that the Aussies are probably the friendliest people I have ever met and I have visited every continent in the world but one. "G'day mate" or like expressions aren't just something from the movie "Crocodile Dundee." However intoned, it's a quality of conviviality that is common everywhere. Order food in most restaurants and you will likely hear at each item you order, "Lovely", "Delightful", "Guud choice!" or "Beautiful," all with a kind of chirping good cheer. And, that's not simply talk.

Everywhere I ate, the food was delicious and extraordinarily inventive. One example, Aborigine-ly inspired Coral Trout slow-smoked in Paper Bark, from the bark peeled off of a tree that looks quite a lot like Birch trees in the US only browner. It was stunningly imaginative and delectious.

Another quality of the Aussies that I found quite touching, was a very subtle kind of deferential affectively connecting speech. It contrasts to what in the United States is more customarily assertive and at times brusque. It is also a quality, however, about which the Aussies don't seem to be particularly aware. This leads to innumerable hilarious discoveries regarding differing qualities of speech of a language we presumably share.

For example, when we arrived at our restaurant at 7:29, my friend approached the maître d', and said "We **had** a reservation for 7:30." After we were seated, I queried, "Why did you say we 'had' a reservation, instead of saying we 'have' a reservation at 7:30." He was completely unaware of what he'd said as we pondered the differences between this procedural manner of speech and what is more customary in the United States. It seemed that the American style can be a bit too forward or presumptive. We laughed out loud that we had to allow the possibility that "Maybe the restaurant changed its mind about our reservation."

Examples like this are abundant, but perhaps my favorite one was a warning sign posted on a trail in the rain forest near the coast. It stated, "Crocodiles inhabit this area. Attacks may cause injury or death." I said to my friend, "'**May**'? Is there another possibility? Like maybe it might it be okay to go pet the more shy ones? Maybe we can give them a warm and fuzzy hug? Well, maybe not fuzzy?" We had a good laugh. But in the main, it is this very subtle linguistic style that underscores an implicit way of relating that is perpetually congenial, always welcoming, and that establishes a quality of friendly egalitarianism.

Now if you love wine like I do, North-West of Sydney is Hunter Valley where you will be in store for wines of the caliber of those in Napa and Sonoma Valley's in California. Like many other areas referred to as "New World wines", such as the United States, Latin America, and so forth, Australia, along with New Zealand, has planted the old varietal grape vines from Europe (the classic "Old World Wines") and created innovative blends of their own. "Extraordinary juice!" as we say in my wine tasting group in LA.

Meanwhile, Sydney, surely ranks as one of the most beautiful cities in the world. If you have the good fortune of flying into Sydney during the daytime make sure you have a window seat as you'll see the most beautiful, undulating harbor connecting countless inland waterways. I have never flown into a more beautiful city in my life. These seemingly endless inlets are broken up by low level mountains and end up creating an inner shoreline that stretches for what seems like thousands of miles. Built on rolling hills, the majestic city of Sydney possess' truly amazing vistas from practically every angle.

Sydney also entails an exquisite combination of older architecture bearing traces of European design, in conjunction with extraordinary new architecture. One of Frank Geary's most recent buildings has just been finished there. Meanwhile, it is hard to find any city in the world that is more favorable for walking for endless hours, while stopping anywhere along the way in some lovely café if not five star restaurant. And for shoppers there are boutiques galore. If you are a person who enjoys visiting the cities of the world, including the most spectacular ones the United States as well as those in Europe, and Latin America, Sydney is a must see experience! While the Sydney Opera house may be its best known crown jewel of it, the rest of it is equally innovative and beautiful.

Though many people dream of going to Australia, and especially Sydney, oftentimes they are put off by what seems like the daunting distance it is from

practically everywhere in the world, not to mention it's rather sizable time zone difference. Having been there twice, however, I was impressed at how easy these issues can be managed. Of course, that meant I had to be mindful of taking one of those handy little sleep aids at night, and of course downing several cups of coffee in the morning and throughout the day. But given the beauty and how stimulating the city is it wasn't hard at all to feel very alive and awake. I never felt any jet lag while there.

Some people may also worry about the expense of traveling to Sydney. Of course given the distance, airfares will be larger than what we often have faced in traveling to our other conference cities, a point which, I will address momentarily. However it's important to know, that once you are in Sydney, you will find that it no more expensive than many of the cities in which we have had our conferences, in fact, in some cases it will be measurably less. So the price of being in Sydney in terms of lodging, local transportation, and food, should not be regarded as an impediment any more than what one encounters traveling to any other city where we've had our conferences. Meanwhile, for those coming from the USA, the current exchange rate is the Australian dollar is 75 cents to every US dollar, so the exchange rate is very favorable, another reason that makes Sydney ideal to travel to this coming year.

Now given the distance you will fly to get to Sydney, it will likely take at least two flights to get there. Given the length in the air, it's likely that some of you will be inclined to fly Business Class, or what is now termed Premium Economy, the latter of which involves larger, more comfortable seating and comes with enhanced services that are not a part of normal Economy class.

If you look on the Internet at round-trip fares between where you are and Sydney, especially if you're considering Business Class, you may be confronted with what feels like extreme "sticker shock." That has much to do, however, with

the extraordinary range of prices for fares that one finds on the Internet. I have come across fares ranging between 4 to 5 times the difference from their low-end to their high-end.

What I recently found that is especially helpful, is a website called YAPTA.com. It is very easy to become a member by registering your email and creating a password. What is fantastic about it is that once you are registered, you can designate the ideal dates of your travel to and from whatever location in the world to which you are travelling, for instance Sydney! You can also designate the airlines where you find the best values as well as those that you trust or simply prefer to travel on. Once you've indicated your dates and checked off the particular airlines you're interested in travelling on, you will be contacted by email whenever there is a price drop in their fares on the designated dates of your trip. Traveling to Sydney this most recent time, I waited until I was notified of a round-trip fare that seemed exceedingly reasonable. I immediately booked and paid for the flight and that was it.

So once again, your biggest expense relative to this conference will likely be your airfare, but from that point on, there's no reason to anticipate that the expense of your travel to Sydney will be any different than it is to any of our cities where we've had conferences. Again, likely even less expensive than some.

So, if you ever wanted to go to Australia, what better time than this coming May to cash in on the opportunity for intellectual and clinical enhancement, for reunion with old friends as well as meeting new ones, and for the opportunity to see one of the most interesting countries in the world and especially one of the World's most beautiful cities.

So mates, I hope very much to see you there next May. Marcia and I will most certainly be there and glad to greet you!

Until we meet again, Phil Ringstrom