

# Travel update



Travel news in the UK is somewhat sparse of late, so this is an update with a difference! *Jane Chiodini* reports on what she learned during her recent trip to Australia

I returned from a trip to Australia this week and my 'traveller' observations have further enhanced my knowledge. This vast continent – which I've never visited before – is about 32 times larger than the UK, and has a population of almost 27 million compared to the UK, which is approaching 70 million according to <https://www.worldometers.info/geography/countries-of-the-world/>.

We only had time to stay in Melbourne in the state of Victoria and Sydney in New South Wales (NSW), but the experiences were great, the sights amazing, people so friendly and the sunshine very welcome after such a long grey winter in the UK. I loved the trams in both cities – so efficient. A double decker train over the Sydney Harbour bridge was cool in both senses of the word, and so much easier than scaling the top of it, as many intrepid walkers do – although we did walk across the bridge beside the traffic as well, which would not comply with the air quality precautions advised by TravelHealthPro <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/country/15/australia>. The ferries from Sydney Harbour were fun and felt cooling despite temperatures of 33°C on some days. We included a trip to Taronga Zoo where we saw all sorts of marsupials. Unfortunately, I underestimated the strength of the sun and have a tender peeling nose to prove it, despite applying a factor 50 sunscreen, clearly not often enough!

## FUNNEL-WEB SPIDERS

I have to say I missed the British news, but the local programme had a number of reports of significance, including an item from the Sydney Australian Reptile Park on news that the Greater Sydney region is expected to see a surge in the highly toxic funnel-web spider population in the coming months amid forecasts of a shortfall of a life-

## JANE CHIODINI, MBE

MSc(TravelMed), RGN, RM, FFTM  
RCPS(Glasg), QN

Past Dean, Faculty of Travel Medicine,  
RCPS(Glasg)  
Director of Travel Health Training  
[www.janechiodini.co.uk/](http://www.janechiodini.co.uk/)  
[www.facebook.com/TravelHealthTraining](https://www.facebook.com/TravelHealthTraining)



saving anti-venom. See <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-02-26/sydney-expected-to-see-surge-in-highly-toxic/104982768>

## JAPANESE ENCEPHALITIS

There was coverage of two cases of Japanese Encephalitis (JE) in Victoria and five human cases were also reported across NSW and Queensland during the season. News of this was posted in the outbreak section for Australia on TravelHealthPro on 4 March, with a link to the Department of Health website for Victoria <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/health-alerts/japanese-encephalitis-in-victoria>. JE vaccine (JEV) is given free of charge in Australia to certain 'at risk' individuals and, with the first cases of JE seen back in 2022, JEV is now recommended by NaTHNaC for some of our travellers to Australia, dependent on a

careful pre-travel risk assessment. While in Melbourne, I was fortunate to catch up over a coffee with a colleague in travel medicine, Dr Sarah McGuiness, who is an Infectious Diseases specialist at Monash University in Melbourne and a key figure in the world of travel medicine. Sarah was the first author of an interesting paper in 2023 on 'The evolving Japanese encephalitis situation in Australia and implications for travel medicine' available at <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10075061/>. She is also undertaking some important research on the development of vaccine decision-making tools. One is available for travellers from Australia who may need to consider JEV for travel purposes. I would recommend you take a look, at <https://www.monash.edu/medicine/sphpm/vaccinedecisionaids-je/home>. On a much smaller scale, I have been involved in speaking about 'communicating risk' for a while now and last December presented at a webinar for the International Society of Travel Medicine on this topic. I created an online platform of resources (including the talk) which you could view at <https://bit.ly/3YcmrVG>

## JET LAG

Lastly the jet lag – well, I'm still struggling with it, but I am taking melatonin and I think it is helping. See <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/melatonin/common-questions-about-melatonin/> where it says there is some evidence that melatonin makes your symptoms less severe. It can also help reduce recovery time after a long flight by a day to a day and a half. So by next week I should be 'back to normal' if it was ever so! ♦

● Between these regular articles, Jane continues to post updates on her FaceBook page: follow her at <https://www.facebook.com/TravelHealthTraining>

