

3rd Column (2016. 4. 15)

「What other countries think of Australia」

Recently I have been wondering how foreigners really think about Australia. It's been 6 months since I have landed in Japan and in this time I have made many Japanese friends, but also international people too. The other day I was out having a few drinks with said international friends and we ended up talking about stereotypes. Of course, I wonder what the international crowd thinks of Australia, so I asked. Here are some of the answers below:

Everything wants to kill you in Australia

There are a lot of unique creatures in Australia. There are cute ones like kangaroos and koalas, and then there are massive crocodiles, snakes, sharks, venomous spiders and ants. Yes, you really should avoid getting bitten or stung by some of them because it can be life threatening, so I can see how this is a common stereotype. However, medical emergencies caused by animals and insects are fairly uncommon, so don't worry too much about them if you ever visit Australia. Do check under the toilet seats for red back spiders though.

People ride kangaroos to work

No.



Australians are always drunk

There is a lot of alcohol enthusiasts in Australia. The average consumption of beer per person over 1 year is 110 liters. That is about a can of beer per day. This is no surprise though, since heavy drinking in Australia seems to be our pride and joy. However, no, we are not always drunk.

Australians curse like sailors

Maybe it is because of our history as a convict settlement, but generally, I do think that Australians tend to swear quite a bit. Although thanks to this perhaps, I've heard that

Australians have an easier time connecting with strangers. Kind of like Kansai dialect in Japan, it has a warm feel to it.

Everyone surfs, is tanned, and muscular

People probably think this because of the Australian actors and actresses in Hollywood movies. Water sports such as surfing are certainly popular in Australia, but no, there is a fair portion of our population that cannot catch waves. The weather is generally nice in most of our states, so a lot of people in Australia are tanned. As for muscular... the obesity rate in Australia is roughly 25% - one in four people (5% in Japan). With that in mind, I think this is not an accurate generalization. However, our diet tends to be high in protein and calories, so for those who work out, it can be a good environment.

There were a few more, but generally, it seemed like people had a good idea of what Australia is actually like. For the Japanese people reading this – were you familiar with these stereotypes of Australia? Through globalization, the world has become more and more interconnected, and with this, it seems that there are less and less ridiculous stereotypes. However, will this be the same for a country like Japan, with a different language, different culture, and geographical isolation? Next time I will be writing about some of the common stereotypes of Japan.