

Welcome to Australia! Memories from Lucca

Australia has always been a country full of foreigners. Year after year, especially since the early 1950s, it has received more and more immigrants. The Second World War brought various migratory flows from France, Germany, and some Asian countries. Reaching Australia from Europe after the Second World War meant a sea voyage which lasted thirty days. When the ship crossed the equator they had a party and each passenger received a certificate showing that he or she had made the crossing.

This huge country usually brings to mind images of outdoor sports, such as the Australian Open tennis tournament, interesting cultural events, such as making barbecues on Christmas day, and fabulous animals such as koalas and kangaroos.

Talking about the economy, the situation was not always so rosy. One Italian migrant from Lucca, Aleandro, said that economic problems always characterized that period. In fact, in the 1950s the many migratory flows weighed on the Australian economy and as a result they required the migrants to live in shelters. According to Aleandro, these migrants lived in good conditions for two years, because they were obliged to remain in the government's hands. This did not have a positive impact on the migrants. However, after these two years they were able to search for a house to live in and to request citizenship. The 1950s Australian economy was not very efficient. Unemployment was widespread and the migrants had problems. It was difficult to pay bills due to lack of jobs, because there were too many migrants.



There was also the problem of language, says Aleandro. Speaking English meant you were deserving of respect and politeness and if you spoke it incorrectly, you wouldn't get anywhere.

In subsequent years the situation changed. People had more possibilities of receiving a stable job. That gave them a decent amount of money and it became easier for them to find a house to live in. Therefore, in the 1970s Australia became Dante's Paradise, says Aleandro. The old migrants became new citizens and their situation improved considerably. The migrants had more chances to receive citizenship.

According to Aleandro, Australians have always shown a great hospitality to migrants. A migrant in Australia always had the possibility to do anything, without worries. For example, he could go into a shop and be welcomed by the shopkeeper, or he could walk across the road and say hello to pedestrians. So Australian life seemed positive and meaningful.

Nowadays, we notice with pleasure how this huge country has been able to organize and modernize itself, to be welcoming for everybody.

— by Sean Bertolacci
Liceo Vallisneri