

A quirky travel tale that's neither fiction nor non-fiction

Synopsis for Kangaroo Land

By

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Hope quits England for six months and with an oversized backpack heads to Sydney. Unfortunately, her initial stay is with hip-swinging Tatum who has unique capabilities of transforming herself into the most irritating, whining person ever.

Keen to experience the flamboyant, outrageous gay side of life, Hope takes on the role of fake-lesbian. Her purpose is to gain entry into the Mardi Gras post-parade party. Being in a venue with muscled men wearing hardly a thing, she soon realizes she made the correct decision. The party is an eye-opener: drugs, being pulled by a lesbian, and transvestites with the best legs she's ever seen.

Later she visits Ten Pound Poms, as history named the Brits who left England's wet climate for Australia's barren land. This period is emotionally touching when the families proudly show off their adopted country and make her welcome into their lives.

Eventually she begins her true purpose – to backpack Australia. It entails sleeping rough, choosing the worse hostels ever, meeting bed hopping bus drivers, and getting chatted up by an Aborigine. Her travelling-life becomes intertwined with folk from across the world – Fake Jane, Sex Mad Janet, The Mental Gang, doped-up-to-the-eyeballs Polly Pecker, heart-throb Lazzarro and backpacking Tallullah who believes bonking the driver means certain privileges.

In all, it becomes a trip Hope never forgets.

Chapter One

“You’ve put on weight!”

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The welcome I received after landing in Australia went something like this.

“You’ve put on weight!” Tatum giggled as I struggled to maintain composure. How I managed to stop whacking her over the head with my holdall was beyond me.

Instead I smiled resentfully.

Tatum held me at arms length, scrutinizing me. For a moment I wondered if she would announce that my boobs were too small, my hips had expanded or hair had sprouted from my nose. But no, it was another area of my body. One which she felt had increased with body fat.

“Yes,” her eyes narrowed, “it’s in the legs.”

I considered vomiting over her perfectly groomed outfit.

“You look *great*.” I replied sarcastically.

“Do I really?” Tatum tittered.

God, she believed me.

Tatum and her boyfriend had been waiting in arrivals at Sydney Airport - sadly the plane had been on time and neither had waited long. Pity.

“This is Max.” Tatum drooled whilst looking up at her man, her dark eyelashes fluttering.

Max was tall, stocky, reasonably good-looking, and murmured ‘hello’ as he yanked at my backpack still attached to my tired body. Max looked embarrassed and hurried into a sea of people and suitcases.

“Come on, let’s get a cab,” Tatum announced, slender hips swaying as she carried my winter scarf.

So, that was how I begun my six months in Australia – being described as a lump of lard.

We took a cab to Kings Cross, a suburb of Sydney which focused more on the seedy side of Sydney.

Tatum and Max lived there.

It would be a fifteen minute drive from the airport to Kings Cross. Luckily we had a quiet cab driver who drove sensibly. It calmed my anger.

The main strip at Kings Cross was alive with people and loud thumping music that vibrated through the car window. I was acutely of this because my forehead was glued to the glass.

Neon lights flashed a succession of blues, reds and whites which lit up buildings – and the sparkling, minuscule tops worn by prostitutes.

There were clubs. Bouncers attempted to lure men inside if a prostitute's seductive charm failed.

Tourists browsed. Several sexy sailors appeared perplexed as to which unsavory venue to nip into for a damn good time.

"What do you think, Hope?" asked Tatum. "It's famed for drink, drugs and sex!"

"You don't say," I whispered, in awe of my surroundings.

My friends lived on a quiet side-street. Their apartment overlooked a cobbled courtyard with tall exotics trees and low-laying shrubs. Inside I noticed the apartment to equal the size of a rabbit-hutch: one-bedroom, lounge, kitchen, and a hall. Oh, and an upstairs neighbour who repeatedly bounced his balls off the floor.

Max opened a bottle of wine to celebrate my arrival. I asked for a large one because secretly I wanted to forget body fat remarks. It worked. Before long, combined with jet-lag, I nodded off and was dribbling over Tatum's worn-out sofa.

As punishment for this, I spent the night curled up beneath a quilt on the uncomfortable two-seater sofa. It came with protruding bed springs.

Slowly slipping off into a deep sleep, I heard the sounds of the outside breeze rustling leaves on the trees. The soft sound blended with the distant buzz of the main strip. An adventure awaited me which began with Sydney and its Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival. I'd been invited to stay briefly with Tatum, then would move on to meet Ten Pound Poms – as history named families who emigrated to Australia in the fifties – and finally backpack through South Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland, Victoria, and back through New South Wales ... alone.

The night heat of a late Australian summer clung to me. Being in Australia hadn't quite sunk in yet. Not only that, my body clock was screwed.

I fell into a deep sleep dreaming of lard legs melting in the Australian sun.