

Keeping travel memories for the future

Ken Gill

You may have already travelled widely around the world or perhaps, similar to my own story, you may have never left Australian shores until a time close to your retirement.

Wherever your travels take you, be that overseas or closer to home, you are likely to want to hold on to the memories of those treasured journeys for a long time to come.

How and why we do that is a personal thing and methods and motivations change with time.

I have wanted to stir up memories of holiday trips that we enjoyed as kids with our parents, but have found that in most cases no photos have survived, or perhaps the photos (or indeed the camera) never existed.

In 2000, my wife and I enjoyed a trip on the Ghan and travelled further through the Northern Territory with another couple of friends. The pleasurable memories of that trip are brought back through printed photos stored in a bulky album with brief hand-written notes of where we were or what we were doing.

In 2008, we were fortunate enough to travel to England and Ireland as part of a Principal's Fellowship research trip (our first ever trip out of Australia). Memories of that travel are energised through another bulky album of printed photos, but now with brief notes which had been typed, printed, cut and pasted. Yes, this was at a time when "cut and paste" could still imply the use of scissors and glue, but also it was just as the delights of scrapbooking were starting to wane.

And so to more recent times where the following "tips and tales" concerning the keeping of travel memories are drawn from subsequent trips to Europe and the UK, Tasmania, the Mediterranean and New Zealand.

The motivation to keep travel memories

Travel in itself provides such a unique experience of enjoyment, relaxation, escape and learning and a sense of renewal. Memories of that travel, whether through images, text, sharing of stories or through quiet moments of reflection, provide long-lasting recharges of those very same feelings.

With the reminder that not everyone enjoys the "old slide show", or even being flooded with daily Facebook posts, there are always many family members and friends who will be keen to see where you have been and what you did and what you might recommend should they wish to undertake a similar trip.

Given all the positives that travel can provide, the stimulus of satisfying memories can counter those times when things are difficult and the focus needs to shift to more enjoyable experiences. Even if all is well, travel is not cheap and the good memories of previous trips help to bridge the time gap that is required to save up for the next experience.

When we return from our trips, it may seem that our children are more pleased to see the return of their babysitters than anything else, but something tells me that they do enjoy (if not immediately) having a tangible record of our trips and experiences. They need that record in a format that they can pick up at a time that suits them within their own busy lives. If we are fortunate to still have our own parents around us, they will derive particular pleasure from our travel memories, especially if the same opportunities were not available to them during their lives.

One person's method of keeping travel memories

Before offering any further advice, it must be acknowledged that the author may be at least two decades behind current primary school students when it comes to the use of modern technologies. The closest I have come to the use of the Cloud was when my mind used to go there during weekly Executive Meetings.

Therefore, you will find that most of the following tips or comments begin with the taking of pictures during your travels. I have not yet managed to take my own advice on this, but there is a strong argument to put the camera away and just savour the moment and take in the uniqueness and beauty of what is around you. Perhaps the strongest memories will be embedded in this way rather than bothering about the quest for the perfect shot.

When travelling, my wife and I have always carried at least one device each for taking pictures. Basically this comprises one (compact) camera each. These days, this can extend also to camera phones and iPads, but we will always have our own camera. Devices can be stolen, lost or damaged and along with them can go many special images. I found, for example, half way through one trip, that cameras and water bottles don't mix well in shared pockets of a backpack.

During our travels, my wife and I share the enjoyment of many similar sights but we also see and wish to record different things. Thus, although we might both return home with thousands of photos, there will be many subjects that have only been captured by one of us.

At the end of each day, particularly to guard against the risk of losing everything in one go from the one place, we usually download our pictures from our cameras to our iPads (no Clouds here). This is also our first opportunity to more easily view and compare our fresh memories of the day.

Although most days are long and tiring (though of course also enjoyable), at the end of the day I also like to write a little about where we have been and what we have done – and this is typed into the iPad. I save each day's small story and as a back-up, email it to myself for safe keeping and later use. This might not be to everyone's taste, but I am usually writing to the taste of at least one nightcap.

When we return home, well after reality sets in and we are suitably punished for being away from our children and grandchildren and parents for so long, comes the desire to save our precious travel memories in the form of a picture book with short stories.

We undertake the first task individually. We each sit with our thousands of photos and commit to culling them to our respective "favourite 400" photos. We later sit side by side, computer by computer (how romantic is this sounding for retirees!) and attempt to cull two lots of favourites down to 400 of the "best of the best". The number 400 comes about for a trip spanning 40 days, i.e. cull to about 10 favourite photos for each day.

There are many picture/story book products commercially available, such as Applebooks and Snapfish, but the one that I have used is Blurb. I prefer a product that has a range of templates to choose from as well as the facility to design your own pages from scratch. Some products involve all processes being done online, but Blurb allows the free download of the program to your computer and the final product later being uploaded for publication.

The cost of each book will vary according to size, number of pages, paper quality and soft or hard cover. If we are paying tens of thousands of dollars for a trip, then it seems OK to pay around \$100 (sometimes more) for a high quality book that will bring back treasured memories year after year. For a small charge (perhaps around \$5 or more) there is the important option of being provided with a PDF version of your book which can be more easily and broadly shared amongst family members or friends.

The format of our travel books has been consistent, but this again would be guided by personal preference. In a 2-page view, the left hand page has a heading of the date and location and underneath that is text which outlines the small story of where we went and what we did. This is interspersed with pictures, the size and quantity of which is determined by how much text was presented. The right hand page is filled with images – sometimes just one, or perhaps up to nine – with a variety of different layouts and borders.

Day 10 - Wednesday 17 April - Cradle Mountain

Another good breakfast and then Margy drove us to the incredible **Cradle Mountain**. We went back via Burnie and Mount Road (following advice to avoid the twistier drive through the Hellyer Gorge). This was about a 2h 15min drive along a road that was better overall than many sections of the highway.

At Cradle Mountain, the **Visitors Centre** and all accommodation is outside the National Park area and we firstly stopped at the Centre to collect our National Parks Pass and also have a baguette for lunch.

We then drove the short distance to check into our accommodation - the "Wombat" cottage at the Highlanders - set close within the bush at the gateway to the National Park. This wooden pine-lined cottage (with wood fire) was excellent and our package included goodies for two cooked breakfasts and a complimentary bottle of bubbly in the fridge.

It was then back to the Visitors Centre where a shuttle bus ran regularly to key places in the National Park (part of your Pass) and we drove to the start of the **Dove Lake Circuit Walk**. We completed this fantastic walk (6.5km) in 2h 15min - longer than expected due to the number of stops taken to simply "take in the view". It was simply beautiful, with the peaceful lake, the majestic Cradle Mountain above, views from Glacier Rock, the dense trees and plants, the varied scenery surrounding boardwalks, stone paths and steps rising and falling. Exhilarating!

Back home for a short rest before being picked up for a 5.45 to 7.45pm evening minibus tour spotlighting for local wildlife. Margy and I sat up front and she assisted with the left hand side spotlighting (holding the light) and we discovered pademelons, Bennett wallabies, wombats, possums and one rarely seen quoll (spotted).

Finally back home for a simple dinner, a bottle of bubble and a quiet read in bed.

(Accommodation - Cradle Mountain Highlander Cottages)



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Keep in mind that we had culled to about 10 photos per day – we might use them all or just the ones that remind us of our favourite experiences or sights that were unique to that location. Sometimes I use available templates but more than often I manipulate these to create my own preferred layouts. For days where the views or experiences were particularly amazing (and therefore it was very difficult to cull the number of photos), the simple solution is to include an additional double page spread of these photos.

The input of text is a simple process as it is downloaded from my original daily emails, copied and pasted and edited within the program.

A large (approx 28cm x 32cm), hard cover glossy publication is a great delight when placed on the coffee table and serves to bring back wonderful memories. It is something tangible that is easily found and shown around and provides a quick reference for answering questions about travel details that may now be too much for the fading memory to manage.

Useful references *(Please enter here any useful references you have found in relation to this topic)*

<http://au.blurb.com/photo-books>

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Ken was Principal of Richmond High School (1992-2004) and Macarthur Girls High School (2005-2010). In retirement he enjoys the challenges of golf, the discoveries of travel and the wonders of watching grandchildren growing up.