

Wischropp: Lyndon graduate returns after three years in Australia

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"I just kept myself open to everything, and the most unusual things happened," she said.

During the three years she was in Australia, Wischropp only made a few trips back to the states.

"I was in Kansas about four weeks out of the year," she said. "It's an expensive trip back and forth."

With her family nearly 10,000 miles away, Wischropp developed an extended family of friends in Australia.

"That's who I spent all my holidays, that's who I spent all my birthdays with - every big thing that happened," she said. "Of course, I told my family what was going on, but they were the support system. They really were my family when I was there."

Wischropp picked up plenty while there, from friends to an accent, but held on to enough of where she was from to set her apart from the locals.

"I got called Kansas all the time," she said.

Her friends even threw her a Dorothy-themed farewell party when she left.

"It was fun," she said. "Instead of a dog, I carried a stuffed wombat."

When she made it back to Kansas this spring, her accent, and that of those around her, took on another round of unfamiliarity.

"The first few days back I noticed it," Wischropp said. "It's funny to hear the voices you've heard all your life, and hear them that way."

Wischropp brought back more than just her experience in Australia when three of her Australian friends visited the United States in April. Ben

"America's great.

Living here is fantastic, but there's a big world to see, and you learn a lot about where you come from when you leave."

Solomon, Mark Histon and Stefan Ellis took the opportunity to tour the U.S., stopping in Los Angeles, Las Vegas, New Orleans and New York before arriving at their final destination of London, where Ellis was planning to stay.

During their stay here, the crew enjoyed some of the simple differences between Australia and the U.S., noticing the "big cars and big highways," and took special privilege in riding around in Wischropp's father's old Cadillac.

"It's brilliant," Histon said. "I feel like Snoop Dogg."

The three also sampled American-style cheeseburgers, a delicacy that tends to be smaller, more rare and less greasy back home. The group was also looking forward to another American staple.

"We're pumped to go to Wal-Mart," Ellis said. "We've heard a lot about it."

The trio and Wischropp knew each other more through friends, but reflect on a kinship Wischropp found with many of her close, and not so close, friends in Australia.

"They were acquaintances, but that's just how it is," she said. "It's that lifestyle. When you're traveling, the people you're with at the moment are your best friends. I probably had a million best friends, depending on where I was

traveling at the time."

Since returning, Wischropp has had to re-acclimate herself to Kansas.

"It's just strange," she said. "I know how everything works here, I just have to remember it again."

She calls the experience a "counter-culture shock." "Getting used to everything again has taken longer than I thought it would," she said. "Everything that's familiar and everything I remembered all of a sudden felt unrelated."

Wischropp has settled back into the Midwest, living just on the Missouri side of Kansas City and taking a nursing position at St. Luke's Hospital. The experience of living on the other side of the world will stick with her for a while, as will her accent and some of the Australian attitude.

"It seems like a frantic pace here now," she said. "Everyone gets so stressed out so easily. Now I'm of the mindset of 'just chill out, it'll happen when it happens.'"

Wischropp feels she learned a lot, not only from where she was, but where she started.

"I never knew what it meant to be an American until I left," she said. "It was a real eye opening. It really made me appreciate my upbringing and where I came from."

Wischropp fully endorses others to find their own road, wherever it may lead them, and whatever adventures it may bring.

"America's great," she said. "Living here's fantastic, but there's a big world to see, and you learn a lot about where you come from when you leave."

Of course, it's okay to come back, too.

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