

Start Local's
Ultimate Destination Guide To

AUSTRALIA

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Australia Travel Guide

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Chapter 1

Discover Australia

Australia! A continent and a country all in one!

Australia boasts of beautiful scenic locations, a spell binding coastline, charming cities and a unique history. Whether it's a trip to explore the Aboriginal traditions and culture, an adventure in the outback, or a shopping metropolitan holiday, Australia has something for everyone.

One of the many popular options is a holiday on Byron Bay. With over 300 accommodations, Byron Bay is a popular tourist destination mainly due to its pristine beaches, and laid-back life-style. There are also enough fun activities every month to keep you on your toes.

If you are looking for a home bred "down under" holiday, then Queensland is the answer. There are ample beaches and resort style lodges to choose from. The atmosphere is serene and completely conducive to total relaxation.

When talking of Australia, who can forget Sydney's spectacular harbour, seductive outdoor lifestyle and great natural beauty. Sydney, famous for its Opera House and Harbour Bridge, has other things on offer like a day trip to the World Heritage-listed Blue Mountains and Hunter Valley vineyards.

Melbourne has more to it than cricket and fashion. Cute cafes, swanky bars, secret art spaces and vintage boutiques line up street walks. Sate your thirst for shopping from Chapel to Brunswick Streets, dance till dawn in Fitzroy and enjoy a kaleidoscope of food, wine and spirited experiences in Federation Square.

Chapter 2

What is Australia famous for?

When you think of Australia, you think of the Opera House, 50,000 kilometers of spellbinding coastline, Uluru, Kakadu National Park, the Great Barrier Reef and of course how can we forget, Surfers Paradise. Here are just some of the many things to do in Australia which cannot be missed.

Yarra Valley

Looking for a wine tasting? The Yarra Valley has much more than that. Boasting of 55 wineries, starting from small family owned vineyards to the famous Chateau Yering and Domain Chandon, Yarra Valley will remind you of the French and Italian wine growing regions.

Bondi Beach

Imagine the blue ocean, the salty breeze and your favorite cocktail in your hand while you choose from amongst numerous beachside eateries catering to every taste bud. From a gelato at the 1920s Bondi Pavilion or tapas at one of the café's at Campbell Parade, Bondi Beach could become your favorite Australian hangout. Read more about Bondi Beach on page 19.



Kangaroo Island

Kangaroo islands are one of the places which you just cannot miss. They definitely scores for native wildlife at its best. An ecological haven Kangaroo Islands will have

you gawking in wonder at the pink pelicans, the sea lions, the sleepy koalas in the trees and the little penguins walking around in pairs.

Great Barrier Reef

Australia's pride, [Great Barrier Reef](#) is marked as a World Heritage site. It is touted to be one of the greatest landmarks on earth, one that can even be viewed from outer space. Great Barrier Reef is also a diver's paradise, where you can swim, snorkel, dive, sail and explore the marine life below.



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Darwin's Mindil Beach Sunset Market

Whether you are a foodie or not, this is one marketplace you just cannot miss. The Sunset Market is held every Thursday night between May and October. On display are over 60 food stalls set up under a balmy, tropical setting. Leave your heels behind but don't forget to bring your appetite, for the delicious smell of the sizzling satay and spicy noodles will have your mouth watering in no time at all.

The Opal fields

The Opal is Australia's most beautiful portable asset. This beautiful gemstone dug from the red soil of Australia's southern Outback counts for almost 80% of the world's Opal production. There are arranged trips available which can take you to the Opal fields for a fun days' activity.

Chapter 3

Geography

Australia is divided into 6 main parts. The landscape stretching on the eastern side comprising of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and some parts of Southern Australia are the most popular beach destinations of the world.

Two of Australia's most significant geographical regions are the East Coast and the Northern Territory. Not to be missed are Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, touted to be major cosmopolitan breaks.



Chapter 4

Best Time to go to Australia

The [Australian climate](#) is extremely tourist friendly. It varies across the vast stretch of the continent and ranges from hot and tropical in the far north to cool and even snowy in the south. The summer months lie from December to February, and the winter months are from June to August. Winter is mild in the Northern belt, but temperatures tend to be much lower in the South.

The spring season starts from September and lasts until November. The autumn season is from March to May.

There are numerous music, theater and film festivals, sporting events and fashion events which are on show every month. These range from the summertime food-and-wine banquets, concerts, arts celebrations, horse races and yachting and surfing contests.

Time zones

Australia has three [time zones](#): Eastern Standard Time (EST) for the eastern states, Central Standard Time (CST) for the Northern Territory and South Australia and Western Standard Time (WST) for Western Australia. Directionally Australia's time falls between GMT +11 during Daylight Savings period and between GMT +10 otherwise.

Daylight Saving

During the Daylight Saving period, clocks are generally wound one hour forward. New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia have Daylight Savings period from October to April. In Western Australia, Daylight Saving period is from October to March. There is no Daylight Saving period in Northern Territory and Queensland.

Must Do's

When planning your next vacation in Australia there are some must do's to make your itinerary smoother.

Visas

Visa requirements are similar for everybody except for Australian or New Zealand citizens, who do not require a visa to enter Australia. New Zealand passport holders generally need to apply for a visa upon arrival in the country.

Everybody else must have a valid visa before leaving their home country. You can apply for a visa at a nearby Australian Consulate. For more detailed information go to the Australian government's [Visas & Immigration website](#).

Customs and quarantine

Like any other country, bringing drugs, steroids, weapons, firearms and protected wildlife into Australia is prohibited. Other prohibited items include fresh or packaged food, fruit, eggs, meat, plants, seeds, skins and feathers. Currency above \$10,000 needs to be declared, although there is no limit on the currency that you can bring into the country. For more detailed information go to the Australian government's [Customs & Quarantine page](#).

Medications

All medicines brought into Australia need to be declared on arrival. Medicines must be accompanied by a prescription or letter from your doctor outlining your medical condition. For more detailed information go to the [Medicare Australia website](#).

Vaccinations

No additional vaccinations are required unless you have visited a yellow fever infected country within six days of your arrival into Australia. Read the Australian Government [Yellow fever fact sheets](#).

The Must Have's

If you end up leaving home without any of these, don't say we didn't warn you!

- 🕒 An adventurous palette to try out seafood, steak (kangaroo most likely), home grown wines, and fresh fruit
- 🕒 A travel insurance policy for the adventurous traveler. The policy should cover skydiving, bungee jumping, diving, skiing, abseiling and white water rafting
- 🕒 Warm clothes, evenings can be both balmy and chilly, and winters are actually cold
- 🕒 A strong and long lasting insect repellent. The flies and mosquitoes can be merciless at times
- 🕒 High SPF Sunscreen, sunglasses and possibly a hat
- 🕒 Stylish and trendy swimming gear. You never know who you might meet. Include a towel along with the sunscreen into your beach bag

Common Scams

When visiting Australia, there are some common scams that you need to be aware of. Every year some innocent tourists are escorted to what apparently are tax-free shopping outlets. In most cases these turn out to be warehouses where souvenirs are being sold at inflated prices.

Ground up meat extract is also sometimes sold to visitors under the label of Essence of Kangaroo. The product is touted to act as an aphrodisiac.

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Spending Money

Flights and accommodation costs vary at different times of the year. During Australia's summer season (January), prices are at an all time high. A midrange traveler hiring a car, seeing the sights, staying in hotels and motels, and basically enjoying himself should budget \$110 to \$160 per person per day. In cities you can push that figure up by \$50 or so, but in suburban areas you can reduce it a little bit.

Ballpark figures to budget for are:

- ④ Accommodation \$50 – \$950 per day
- ④ Getting around – Hiring a car including fuel will cost \$150-\$250 per day, depending on a 4W or a 2W car.
- ④ Food for one at \$35 - \$50 a day
- ④ Sightseeing, entry to various things, trips etc \$600.

Chapter 5

Ways to Get Around

Regular [public transport](#) such as bus, train and taxi connections are easily available outside all of Australia's airports. Shuttle buses also provide transfers to your accommodation.

Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane rate right at the top for being one of the most car-dependent cities in the world. Sydney and Melbourne are close behind in this list. Other than cars, public transport options like buses, trams and taxis are easily available in all major cities of Australia.

A national bus network is provided by Greyhound Australia. Tickets can be purchased online and are 5% cheaper than over-the-counter tickets.

You can also book by phone, albeit there is a \$4 booking fee. The greyhound pass can be used on almost all bus networks, although it does not apply on certain networks within smaller cities. In this case the bus pass is a better alternative. You can get more information on www.greyhound.com.au.

Language

Australia does not have a national language, but [Australian English](#) has its own nuances and accent. Phrases used in a colloquial manner remain a large part of Australia's culture and heritage.

Currency

[Australia's currency](#) comprises of coins in the range of 5, 10, 20 and 50 cent and one and two dollar denominations. Besides these, notes of 5, 10, 20, 50 and 100 dollar denominations are also in circulation. For every USD 1, you can get 1.01554

AUD. (As of 22/11/2010) The US dollar is just slightly more expensive than the AUD. However you can check the current exchange rate at <http://www.xe.com>

Chapter 6

Eating Out

When it comes to eating, few can beat the Australians. The country houses a collection of restaurants, cafes and bars which could put the yellow pages to shame. A morsel to furnish every taste bud, the variety of cuisine is endless. People are generally touted to be addicted to coffee, seafood and global cuisine. Of course not far behind are the wide selection of wines and home produced liquor collections from the local vineyards.

Sydney's Night Noodle Market

Australians love Asian food and their love can clearly be seen in the form of Sydney's Night Noodle Market. The aromatic smell of spicy noodles and broth can make anybody's mouth water.

Tasting Australia Festival

The [Tasting Australia Festival](#) is the highlight of the autumn season in South Australia. Richly laden with seasonal produce and indulgent flavors, it is everyone's dream come true. The Tasting Australia festival lasts for eight days in April and May.

Tasmania Taste Festival

Imagine more than 70 food stalls, eating, drinking and merriment for eight days and seven nights all under one roof. This is known as the Tasmania Taste Festival, which marks the beginning of the new year in the Australian summer. The festival also includes arts exhibitions and stage performances.

Orange F.O.O.D Week

Orange F.O.O.D Week is a 10 day celebration of divine fresh food and the people who create them. The festival is held in April and is located less than 4 hours from Sydney.

Chapter 7

Sights & Entertainment

Australia boasts of a myriad of activities and things to do. Australians are known for their carefree nature and buoyant attitude. There is a huge variety of things to choose from and multiple places to visit. Most of the things are available on a year round basis. Others are seasonal.

Kakadu National Park

The Kakadu National Park is a World Heritage site and is Australia's largest national park. It houses a variety of habitats and wildlife, including saltwater crocodiles. Within the park you can go on the Barrk Sandstone Bushwalk which starts from Anbangbang Gallery at Nourlangie. This is probably the best way to enjoy the scenic beauty of the park.

Sydney

Sydney, Sydney harbor, and Sydney harbor national park are a must see when visiting Australia. Sydney is Australia's oldest, largest and most diverse city. It offers a cocktail of experiences, the most popular being the surf beaches at Bondi, sailing under the Harbour Bridge on a yacht, jogging along the Coogee cliff tops or exploring Centennial Park on horseback.

The most obvious aspect of the city is its spirit. You can feel it in every bone as you walk along the many pedestrian walks, dine at

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the many cafes, or simply shop.

The Sydney harbor bridge is the cities pride and joy, second only to the Opera House. Better known as the “old coathanger” in modest circles, the massive structure links the CBD with North Sydney. It’s a fun place for the old and young whether you drive over it, climb it, rollerblade across it or sail under it.



Melbourne

The first thing that comes to mind when [Melbourne](#) strikes is the famous Melbourne Cricket Ground. Australians take their sports seriously, and Melbournians even more so. They are known to go ballistic around the Australian Football League (AFL; ‘footy’ to the locals) finals and during Spring Racing Carnival, besides the cricket season.

Besides sports, Melbourne comprises of a heady mixture of sophisticated slickness, eclectic glamour and enough adrenaline to keep you on the edge of your seat. The Federation Square ranks tops in places to visit when in Melbourne.

Bondi Beach

Bondi beach is Australia’s most famous beach and is a very popular tourist destination. The beach itself is about a kilometer long and is easily accessible from Sydney city center, which is only 8km away. The water is safe for swimming and there are plenty of lifeguards to keep people from straying away from the red and yellow flags.

If you are traveling with kids, the salt water baths on either side of the beach are the perfect choice. Or if surfing is your thing, as is

The Bondi Pavilion or the walkway often has entertainment and exhibitions which are free to attend.

the case with most Australians, there are personal instructors available with whom you can take a lesson or two before you head back home.

There are some great restaurants, plenty of eateries, pubs and clubs for a happening nightlife. You can dress casually in most of the dining places. Most of these have a spectacular view so try to book a table in advance to get the best one. The Bondi Pavilion or the walkway often has entertainment and exhibitions which are free to attend. At the north end of the beach there is a coin-operated barbecue where couples and families can have picnics. Drinking alcohol is not allowed on the beach.

Bondi beach also has at least two great coastal walks (6km) starting at the south end of the beach. These walks are thronged by visitors night and day. You can walk upto to Coogee Beach or decide to walk partway and take a bus back to Bondi, Coogee or the City.

The Australian Opera

The iconic Sydney Opera House is a visual treat, both inside and outside. The building and its architecture are truly a masterpiece of late modern architecture. It houses over 40 shows a week. The shows cater to a diverse audience, from opera, to music, theatre and even kids.

Australian Theatre

Theatre and music are the lifeblood of many Australians. They are passionate theatre-goers and appreciate it in all forms. Whether it's a structured stage performance at the Opera House or one of the many street productions, or even an exclusive performance at Melbourne's opulent theatre district, the booths are always packed.

Yulara - Ayers Rock Resort

More than just a rock, Yulara offers a spoonful of heritage for every inch of land. Lying just outside the Uluru national park, 20km from Uluru and 53km from Kata Tjuta, the complex offers a sneak peek into the Aboriginal way of life.

Flinders Ranges

Campers, caravan-ers and travellers constantly seek sanctuary in the Flinders Ranges which prove to be a significant destination for geology lovers, wildlife lovers and people seeking the essence of the Australian bush.

There are also some other seasonal events which light up the year from time to time.

Melbourne's Spring Racing Carnival

The Melbourne Spring Racing Carnival brings horse racing, fashion and fun together on a single platform. It starts in September and ends mid-November. The carnival is held at the Flemington Racecourse

Australia's Summer of Cricket



It may not be the national sport but cricket pretty much makes up the life stream of every red bloodied Australian. It is the sport most avidly played in the summer months. The national team's cricket matches are watched live at the famous Melbourne cricket stadium where fans throng to be a part of the most exciting matches in cricket history.

Australia's Grand Slam Summer of Tennis

Surfing and cricket are not the only things making up the sporting spirit of Australia. Tennis ranks equally well amongst their favorite sports. The Australian Open Tennis Championship, one of the four Grand Slam events of the year is played every year in January in Australia. Tennis stars and top seeds travel down under to be a part of this event. Besides this Perth's Hopman Cup also attracts substantial visitors and avid tennis fans.

The Australian Grand Prix, Melbourne

Australians take their sports seriously, and the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne is no exception. The event takes place in Albert Park for four days in March. Racing hearts coupled with racing cars make the perfect match for one of the fastest events of the year.

The Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race

The Sydney Harbour is the touchstone of one of the more remarkable events of Australia's summer. The Yacht Race starts with the yachts sailing out of Sydney Harbour on Boxing Day, December 26. Most people enjoy this with a picnic, barbeque or boat cruise on Sydney Harbour.

Fashion Week in Melbourne and Sydney

Sports, theatre, opera and of course fashion. They all belong under the same genre, that of entertainment. And the Australians certainly know how to give a good dose of that.

There are two fashion weeks held at different times of the year. The L'Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival takes place in march and features the autumn/ winter collections, whereas the Rosemount Australian Fashion Week marks the spring summer collections and is held in May in Sydney.

Australia's surfing events

Surfing is probably one of the commonest past times in Australia, what with three coastlines offering a selection of delectable waves. But the surfing action heats up between February and April. This is the time when Australia hosts the World Qualifying Series. Millions of visitors and surfing pros mark this festival to celebrate sand, sun and the sea.



The Cooly Classic - Coolangatta Ocean Swim

The “Cooly Classic” forms the icon of Australia’s summer time. Sand, surf and sport come together to form a hearty combination and are put on display in the Coolangatta Ocean Swim held in April.

Yarra River cruise

If you are looking to cruise the sites, there is no better way than the Yarra River Cruise. The cruise gives you insights into landmarks within Melbourne. You can also take cruises upto Port Melbourne, the Docklands and the River Gardens.

Chapter 8

Shopping

It does not end with sports and food. [Australians love to shop](#) till they drop. The malls and markets in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide are lit up night and day by the constant chatter and frenzy of the excited shoppers. Organized shopping trips are also available for the mega shoppers.

Rundle Mall - Adelaide

Rundle mall is considered to be one of the largest shopping malls in the Southern Hemisphere. It has over 800 shops and 14 interconnected arcades. There is a huge variety of fashion, clothing, jewelry, gifts and accessories available from around the world and Australia.

Antique Market

The Antique Market in Adelaide has 36 antiques and collectibles dealers within a single showroom. Visitors can find every kind of antique in a single location and shop to their hearts content.

Pitt Street Mall and The Strand - Sydney

The Pitt Street Mall in Sydney is famous for the Strand, Skygarden and the Glasshouse collection of stores. These house fashion, clothing, food and other trendy items. The Strand Arcade is particularly famous for its beautiful old arcade style building with ornate wrought iron lace balconies

Darling Harbour – Harbourside – Sydney

Darling harbor, true to its name, has proven to be the darling of the local people. The place offers a unique shopping experience including entertainment, food, things to do for the whole family and national attractions. It is touted to be the best place to look for an Australian souvenir.



Sydney Chinatown

Like any other metropolitan city, Sydney too has its own Chinatown. The place is located around Dixon Street and has on offer Chinese and Asian foods and all kinds of Asian speciality shops

Shopping Streets and Markets



Both Pitt Street and Castlereagh Street are rated top shopping spots. These include the Queen Victoria Building, Chifley Plaza and Skygarden.

If you are looking for the latest in street fashion trends, Oxford Street in Paddington and Darlinghurst both offer a wide variety to choose from.

And last but not the least, if you still have some money left over be sure to check out the Circular Quay and The Rocks.

High fashion and cutting edge design can be found in exclusive pockets around Sydney. Sydney City, Paddington, Bondi and Newtown offer the big brands and many boutique shops for up and coming designers. In the city, places like the QVB, Strand Arcade, World Square and Pitt St Mall should be checked out.

Chapter 9

Bargain hunting

If [bargain hunting](#) is more your thing, be sure to check out the following options for trendy street designs at reasonable prices.

Birkenhead Point

At Birkenhead Point, Brands United, Marcs and FCUK are just some of the factory outlets offering wares at bargain prices. Birkenhead Point is located just off Victoria Road.

DFO

There is another collection of factory outlets next to Olympic Park. There are plenty of brand names and bargains to choose from over here.

Alexandria

Alexandria has plenty of manufacturers / distributors in a small suburban town like setting. You can buy directly from the manufacturers shaving overheads efficiently from the tag price. Brands like Events, I Love Rima Shoes, Irregular Jeans Warehouse and Victoria's Basement all offer discounted wares.

Chapter 10

Family fun

Australia has enough to do for the family travelers. Visitors with kids in tow can plan a whole holiday around several [family fun](#) options.

Australian Toy Museum

This historic building houses toys from the 1880's till the present. It houses a jaw dropping collection of doll houses and dolls. Also on display is a garden with a miniature steam train and the Magic Pudding Cafe.

Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre

You can plan a whole days activity with your kids at the Sports and Aquatics Center in Melbourne. It has a wave pool, a water slide, toddlers pool, a garden, and a diving complex.

Kryal Castle



Kryal Castle is another fun place for a whole day's activity with the family. It is close to Melbourne, so after you have scoured the city it would be a good idea to explore the Castle. There are medieval re-enactments, fun games and shows to look forward to during the Castle visit.

Collingwood Children's Farm

At Collingwood Children's Farm, kids can pet and feed a variety of farm animals, do simple farm chores and milk a cow. There are farm tours available which teach children about plants and animals.



Surf World Surfing Museum

For the little kids striving for some surfing fun, the Surf World Surfing Museum is the place to go. There are numerous displays which both children and adults would be interested in.

Fun Factory

The South Yarra Fun Factory is the largest indoor amusement center in the country. It houses Daytona racing machines, assorted pinball, shooting and skills test games, pool tables, a rollerblade rink and "dodge-em" cars. A surefire place to have a ball with your family.

Chapter 11

Fast facts

- 🕒 Number of beaches – 50,000 km - 11,011 beaches
- 🕒 Number of pubs, taverns and bars – over 3,454
- 🕒 Number of shopping places – 1,338 shopping centers
- 🕒 Number of eating places - 15,938
- 🕒 Read more fun facts [here](#)

Important telephone numbers

- 🕒 Police, medical and fire - dial 000 . From a mobile phone dial 112 or 000. No other emergency numbers, such as 911, are redirected.
- 🕒 State Emergency Service (ACT, VIC, NSW, QLD, SA) - dial 132 500
- 🕒 SES (WA) - dial 1300 130 039. From a Textphone/TTY – dial 106 for National Relay Service
- 🕒 Non Emergency - Police Assistance Line - dial 131 444
- 🕒 Crime Stoppers – dial 1800 333 000
- 🕒 Threats to national security - dial 1800 123 400
- 🕒 Poisons Information Centre – dial 13 11 26
- 🕒 Kids Help Line - dial 1800 55 1800
- 🕒 Diver Emergency Network - dial 1800 088 200
- 🕒 Asthma Australia - dial 1800 645 130
- 🕒 Diabetes Australia - dial 1300 136 588
- 🕒 Read more important numbers [here](#)

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