

# Australia

A horizontal bar with a rainbow gradient from red to purple.

## Understand Australia & Survival Guide

(PDF Chapter)

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# Understand Australia

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# Australia Today

Australia's cultural and geographic identity has been forged by 45 million years of isolation. The country's harsh but beautiful landscape continues to survive bushfires, droughts and floods – a resilience that has rubbed off on the Australian people. Hiding behind larrikin wit and amicable informality, Australians have an innate optimism that helped steer their economy through the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). But can the good times last? If the political landscape and real estate market are any indication, the future is far from clear.

## Best on Film

**Lantana** (director Ray Lawrence; 2001) Mystery for grown-ups: a meditation on love, truth and grief.  
**Gallipoli** (director Peter Weir; 1981) Nationhood in the crucible of WWI.  
**Mad Max** (director George Miller; 1979) Mel Gibson gets angry.  
**The Hunter** (director Daniel Nettheim; 2011) Grumpy Willem Dafoe goes hunting for the last Tasmanian Tiger.  
**Ten Canoes** (directors Rolf de Heer and Peter Djigirr; 2006) The first Australian film scripted entirely in Aboriginal language.

## Best in Print

**The Narrow Road to the Deep North** (Richard Flanagan; 2014) From Hobart to the Thai–Burma Death Railway. Man Booker Prize winner.  
**Dirt Music** (Tim Winton; 2002) Guitar-strung Western Australian page-turner.  
**Oscar & Lucinda** (Peter Carey; 1988) Man Booker Prize winner. How to relocate a glass church.  
**The Body surfers** (Robert Drewe; 1983) Moody stories from Sydney's Northern Beaches.  
**The Secret River** (Kate Grenville; 2005) Convict life in the 19th-century around Sydney.

## Politics

Mimicking global warming, the Australian political climate has been overheated and irritable of late. In 2013, the left-wing Labor Party was ousted from federal government by the conservative Liberal-National Party Coalition. In the lead-up to the election, Labor was destabilised by an extraordinary period of divisive infighting and factional power plays. Australia's first female prime minister, Julia Gillard, lost the top job to Kevin Rudd in early 2013, whom she herself had ousted as PM in 2010.

Sitting back and rubbing their eyes in disbelief, the conservatives watched the prime-ministerial circus play out. They then easily won the 2013 election, surfing into office on a wave of public dismay over Labor's leadership soap opera. New prime minister Tony Abbott had the look of a man standing on the threshold of a future he wasn't quite anticipating.

Then, in 2015, things started to go awry for Abbott. His popularity flagging, he made the bizarre choice of bestowing a knighthood on Prince Philip (husband of the British Queen) on Australia Day – a move lambasted by the media and hailed as un-Australian by the public. A leadership spill was mooted, with PM-in-waiting and former leader of the Liberal Party Malcolm Turnbull the favoured candidate. But the leadership vote didn't happen: Abbott dodged a bullet, but by the time you read this, there may be a different PM ruling the roost.

## Real Estate Addiction

Australians love real estate. They love talking about it, building it, buying it, looking at it on TV and (most of all) making money selling it. When the GFC bit everybody in 2008, economists and bankers across the Western world very sensibly said, 'Whoops! We've been lending people money they can't afford to pay back, and they've been blowing it on home loans that are too expensive' – and real estate prices tumbled.

But not in Australia. There was a glorious mining boom in motion: nobody worried about ridiculous real estate prices when there was always another chunk of Western Australia waiting to be exhumed and sold to China. Australians just kept on buying pricey houses, driving the market skywards. Now – having reached a tipping point where the median house price is more than five times the median annual household income – Australian real estate prices are among the least affordable on the planet.

What happens next? The Chinese economy has slowed and Australian mining exports are flagging. Fears of a property bubble about to burst are rife in the media. But as long as interest rates remain low and the perception endures that Australia is the 'lucky country' and is somehow immune to global strife, the national real estate addiction will be hard to break.

## City Scenes

Australia is an urbanised country: around 90% of Australians live in cities and towns. Cities here are in a constant state of growth, reinvention and flux, absorbing fresh influences from far corners of the globe. The sense that the local is inferior to the foreign – a phenomenon known as 'cultural cringe' – is less prevalent today than it was 30 years ago. National pride is on the up, manifest in urban arts and culinary scenes. Multiculturalism prevails and cities here remain distinct: Sydney is a luscious tart, Melbourne an arty glamour puss, Brisbane a blithe playmate, Adelaide a gracious dame and Perth a free spirit. Not to mention bookish Hobart, hedonistic Darwin and museum-fixated Canberra. Aussie cities are charmers: spend some time getting to know one of them and it'll be hard for you to leave!

POPULATION: **23.75 MILLION**

AREA: **7.7 MILLION SQ KM**

GDP: **US\$1.53 TRILLION**

GDP GROWTH: **3.5%**

INFLATION: **1.7%**

UNEMPLOYMENT: **6.4%**

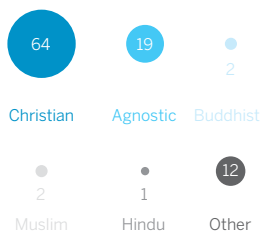
## if Australia were 100 people



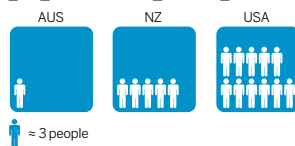
79 would speak English at home  
 3 would speak Chinese at home  
 2 would speak Italian at home  
 1 would speak Vietnamese at home  
 1 would speak Greek at home  
 14 would speak another language at home

## belief systems

(% of population)



## population per sq km



# History

by Michael Cathcart

Australia is an ancient continent – its Indigenous peoples have been here more than 50,000 years. Given this backdrop, ‘history’ as we describe it can seem somewhat fleeting...but it sure makes an interesting read! From the days of struggling convict colonies to independence from Great Britain, the new nation found its feet. Wars, the Depression and cultural evolution defined the 20th century, when the impact of modern Australia on the country’s ancient landscape and Indigenous peoples was thrown into stark relief.

Michael Cathcart is a well known broadcaster on ABC Radio National and has presented history programs on ABC TV.

## Intruders Arrive

By sunrise the storm had passed. Zachary Hicks was keeping sleepy watch on the British ship *Endeavour* when suddenly he was wide awake. He summoned his commander, James Cook, who climbed into the brisk morning air to a miraculous sight. Ahead of them lay an uncharted country of wooded hills and gentle valleys. It was 19 April 1770. In the coming days Cook began to draw the first European map of Australia’s eastern coast. He was mapping the end of Aboriginal supremacy.

Two weeks later Cook led a party of men onto a narrow beach. As they waded ashore, two Aboriginal men stepped onto the sand and challenged the intruders with spears. Cook drove the men off with musket fire. For the rest of that week, the Aboriginal people and the intruders watched each other warily.

Cook’s ship *Endeavour* was a floating annexe of London’s leading scientific organisation, the Royal Society. The ship’s gentlemen passengers included technical artists, scientists, an astronomer and a wealthy botanist named Joseph Banks. As Banks and his colleagues strode about the Indigenous Australians’ territory, they were delighted by the mass of new plants they collected. (The showy banksia flowers, which look like red, white or golden bottlebrushes, are named after Banks.)

The local Aboriginal people called the place Kurnell, but Cook gave it a foreign name: he called it ‘Botany Bay’. The fertile eastern coastline of Australia is now festooned with Cook’s place names – including Point Hicks, Hervey Bay (after an English admiral), Endeavour River and Point Solander (after one of the *Endeavour*’s scientists).

## TIMELINE

**80 million  
years ago**

After separating from the prehistoric Gondwana landmass about 120 million years ago, Australia breaks free from Antarctica and heads north.

**50,000  
years ago**

The earliest record of Aboriginal people inhabiting the land. The country is home to lush forests, teeming lakes and giant marsupials including a wombat the size of a rhinoceros.

**1616**

The Dutch trading route across the Indian Ocean to Indonesia utilises winds called ‘the Roaring Forties’. These winds bring Captain Dirk Hartog to the Western Australian coast.

When the *Endeavour* reached the northern tip of Cape York, blue ocean opened up to the west. Cook and his men could smell the sea-route home. And on a small, hilly island (Possession Island), Cook raised the Union Jack. Amid volleys of gunfire, he claimed the eastern half of the continent for King George III.

Cook's intention was not to steal land from the Indigenous Australians. In fact he rather idealised them. 'They are far more happier than we Europeans,' he wrote. 'They think themselves provided with all the necessaries of Life and that they have no superfluities.' At most, his patriotic ceremony was intended to contain the territorial ambitions of the French, and of the Dutch, who had visited and mapped much of the western and southern coast over the previous two centuries. Indeed, Cook knew the western half of Australia as 'New Holland'.

## Convict Beginnings

In 1788, 18 years after Cook's arrival, the English were back to stay. They arrived in a fleet of 11 ships, packed with supplies including weapons, tools, building materials and livestock. The ships also contained 751 convicts and around 250 soldiers, officials and their wives. This motley 'First Fleet' was under the command of a humane and diligent naval captain, Arthur Phillip. As his orders dictated, Phillip dropped anchor at Botany Bay. But the paradise that had so delighted Joseph Banks filled Phillip with dismay. The country was marshy; there was little healthy water; and the anchorage was exposed to wind and storm. So Phillip left his floating prison and embarked in a small boat to search for a better location. Just a short way up the coast his heart leapt as he sailed into the finest harbour in the world. There, in a small cove, in the idyllic lands of the Eora people, he established a British penal settlement. He renamed the place after the British Home Secretary, Lord Sydney.

The intruders set about clearing trees and building shelters and were soon trying to grow crops. Phillip's official instructions urged him to colonise the land without doing violence to local inhabitants, but Aboriginal peoples around Sydney were shattered by loss of their lands. Hundreds died of smallpox, and many succumbed to alcoholism and despair.

In 1803 English officers established a second convict settlement in Van Diemen's Land (later called Tasmania). Soon, re-offenders filled the grim prison at Port Arthur on the beautiful and wild coast near Hobart. In time, others would endure the senseless agonies of Norfolk Island prison in the remote Pacific Ocean.

So miserable were these convict beginnings, that Australians long regarded them as a period of shame. But things have changed: today most white Australians are inclined to brag a little if they find a convict in their family tree. Indeed, Australians annually celebrate the arrival of

Tasmania's Aboriginal peoples were separated from mainland Australia when sea levels rose after the last Ice Age – they subsequently developed their own utterly distinct languages and cultures.

In remote parts of Australia, and in centres such as Alice Springs and Darwin, many Aboriginal people still speak their traditional languages rather than English. Many people are multilingual – there were once more than 300 Aboriginal language groups on mainland Australia.

1770

Captain James Cook is the first European to map Australia's east coast, which he names 'New South Wales'. He returns to England having found an ideal place for settlement at 'Botany Bay'.

1788

The First Fleet brings British convicts and officials to the lands of the Eora people, where Governor Arthur Phillip establishes a penal settlement. He calls it 'Sydney'.

1789

An epidemic of smallpox devastates the Aboriginal groups around Sydney. British officers report that Indigenous Australians' bodies are rotting in every bay of the harbour.

1804

In Van Diemen's Land (now called Tasmania), David Collins moves the fledgling convict colony from Risdon Cove to the site of modern Hobart.

## BENNELONG

Among the Indigenous Australians Governor Philip used as intermediaries was an influential Eora man named Bennelong, who adopted many white customs and manners. After his initial capture, Bennelong learnt to speak and write English and became an interlocutor between his people and the British, both in Australia and on a trip to the United Kingdom in 1792. His 1796 letter to Mr and Mrs Philips is the first known text in English by an Indigenous Australian.

For many years after his return to Sydney, Bennelong lived in a hut built for him on the finger of land now known as Bennelong Point, today the site of the Sydney Opera House. He led a clan of 100 people and advised then Governor Hunter. Although accounts suggest he was courageous, intelligent, feisty, funny and 'tender with children', in his later years Bennelong's health and temper were affected by alcohol. He was buried in the orchard of his friend, brewer James Squire, in 1813.

the First Fleet at Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788 as 'Australia Day'. It's no surprise that Indigenous Australians refer to the day as 'Invasion Day'.

## From Shackles to Freedom

At first, Sydney and the smaller colonies depended on supplies brought in by ship. Anxious to develop productive farms, the government granted land to soldiers, officers and settlers. After 30 years of trial and error, farms began to flourish. The most irascible and ruthless of the new landholders was John Macarthur. Along with his spirited wife Elizabeth, Macarthur pioneered the breeding of merino sheep on his property near Sydney.

Macarthur was also a leading member of the 'Rum Corps', a clique of powerful officers who bullied successive governors (including William Bligh of *Bounty* fame) and grew rich by controlling much of Sydney's trade, notably rum. But the Corps' racketeering was ended in 1810 by a tough new governor named Lachlan Macquarie. Macquarie laid out the major roads of modern-day Sydney, built some fine public buildings (many of which were designed by talented convict-architect Francis Greenway) and helped to lay the foundations for a more civil society.

By now, word was reaching England that Australia offered cheap land and plenty of work, and adventurous migrants took to the oceans in search of their fortunes. At the same time the British government continued to transport prisoners.

In 1825 a party of soldiers and convicts established a penal settlement in the territory of the Yuggera people, close to modern-day Brisbane. Before long this warm, fertile region was attracting free settlers, who were soon busy farming, grazing, logging and mining.

### Convict History Hotspots

Port Arthur  
Historic Site,  
Tasmania

Parramatta,  
Sydney

Rottneet Island,  
Western Australia

Hyde Park Bar-  
racks, Sydney

### 1820s

In Van Diemen's Land, Aboriginal people and settlers clash in the Black Wars. The bloody conflict devastates the Aboriginal population. Only a few survive.

### 1829

Captain James Stirling heads a private company that founds the settlement of Perth on Australia's west coast. The surrounding land is arid, retarding development of the colony.

### 1835

John Batman sails from Van Diemen's Land to Port Phillip and negotiates a land deal with elders of the Kulin Nation. The settlement of Melbourne follows that same year.

### 1836

Colonel William Light chooses the site for Adelaide on the banks of the Torrens River in the lands of the Kurna people. Unlike Sydney and Hobart, settlers here are free, willing immigrants.

## Two New Settlements: Melbourne & Adelaide

In the cooler grasslands of Tasmania, the sheep farmers were also thriving. In the 1820s they waged a bloody war against the island's Aboriginal peoples, driving them to the brink of extinction. Now these settlers were hungry for more land. In 1835 an ambitious young man named John Batman sailed to Port Phillip Bay on the mainland. On the banks of the Yarra River, he chose the location for Melbourne, famously announcing 'This is the place for a village.' Batman persuaded local Indigenous Australians to 'sell' him their traditional lands (a whopping 250,000 hectares) for a crate of blankets, knives and knick-knacks.

At the same time, a private British company settled Adelaide in South Australia (SA). Proud to have no links with convicts, these God-fearing folks instituted a scheme under which their company sold land to well-heeled settlers, and used the revenue to assist poor British labourers to emigrate. When these worthies earned enough to buy land from the company, that revenue would in turn pay the fare of another shipload of labourers. This charming theory collapsed in a welter of land speculation and bankruptcy, and in 1842 the South Australian Company yielded to government administration. By then miners had found rich deposits of silver, lead and copper at Burra, Kapunda and the Mt Lofty Ranges, and the settlement began to pay its way.

### The Search for Land Continues

Each year, settlers pushed deeper into Aboriginal territories in search of pasture and water for their stock. These men became known as squatters (because they 'squatted' on Aboriginal lands) and many held this territory with a gun. To bring order and regulation to the frontier, from the 1830s the governments permitted the squatters to stay on these 'Crown lands' for payment of a nominal rent. Aboriginal stories tell of white men slaughtering groups of Aboriginal people in reprisal for the killing of sheep or settlers. Later, across the country, people would also tell stories of black resistance leaders, including Yagan of Swan River, Pemulwuy of Sydney, and Jandamarra, the outlaw-hero of the Kimberley.

In time, many of the squatters reached a compromise with local tribes. Indigenous Australians took low-paid jobs on sheep and cattle stations as drovers and domestics. In return they remained on their traditional lands, adapting their cultures to their changing circumstances. This arrangement continued in outback pastoral regions until after WWII.

The newcomers had fantasised about the wonders waiting to be discovered from the moment they arrived. Before explorers crossed the Blue Mountains west of Sydney in 1813, some credulous souls imagined that

Acclimatisation societies of the 19th century tried to replace the 'inferior' Australian plants and animals with 'superior' European ones. Such cute 'blessings' as rabbits and foxes date from this time.

A brilliant biography of Cook is JC Beaglehole's *The Life of Captain James Cook* (1974). Beaglehole also edited Cook's journals. There are several biographies online, including the excellent [www.wikipedia.org/wiki/james\\_cook](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/james_cook).

#### 1851

Prospectors find gold in central Victoria, triggering a great rush of youthful prospectors from across the world.

At the same time, the eastern colonies exchange the governor's rule for democracy.

#### 1854

Angered by the hefty cost of licences, gold miners stage a protest at the Eureka Stockade near Ballarat. Several rebels are killed;

others are charged with treason. Public opinion supports the rebels.

#### 1861

The explorers Burke and Wills become the first Europeans to cross the continent from south to north.

Their expedition is an expensive debacle that claims several lives, including their own.

#### 1872

Engineer Charles Todd builds a telegraph line from Adelaide to Darwin. It joins an undersea cable to Java, linking Australia to Europe. The age of electronic information is born.



David Unaipon (Ngarrindjeri; 1872–1967), the 'Australian Leonardo da Vinci', is remembered as an advocate for Indigenous culture, a writer and an inventor.

He took out 19 provisional patents, including drawings for a pre-WWI, boomerang-inspired helicopter. His portrait is on the Australian \$50 note.

China lay on the other side. Then explorers, surveyors and scientists began trading theories about inland Australia. Most spoke of an Australian Mississippi. Others predicted desert. An obsessive explorer named Charles Sturt (there's a fine statue of him looking lost in Adelaide's Victoria Sq) believed in an almost mystical inland sea.

The explorers' expeditions inland were mostly journeys into disappointment. But Australians made heroes of explorers who died in the wilderness (Ludwig Leichhardt, and the duo of Burke and Wills, are the most striking examples). It was as though the Victorian era believed that a nation could not be born until its men had shed their blood in battle – even if that battle was with the land itself.

## Gold & Rebellion

Transportation of convicts to eastern Australia ceased in the 1840s. This was just as well: in 1851 prospectors discovered gold in New South Wales (NSW) and central Victoria. The news hit the colonies with the force of a cyclone. Young men and some adventurous women from every social class headed for the diggings. Soon they were caught up in a great rush of prospectors, entertainers, publicans, sly-groggers (illicit liquor-sellers), prostitutes and quacks from overseas. In Victoria, the British governor was alarmed – both by the way the Victorian class system had been thrown into disarray, and by the need to finance law and order on the goldfields. His solution was to compel all miners to buy an expensive monthly licence, partly in the hope that the lower orders would return to their duties in town.

But the lure of gold was too great. In the reckless excitement of the goldfields, the miners initially endured the thuggish troopers who enforced the government licence. After three years, however, the easy gold at Ballarat was gone, and miners were toiling in deep, water-sodden shafts. They were now infuriated by a corrupt and brutal system of law which held them in contempt. Under the leadership of a charismatic Irishman named Peter Lalor, they raised their own flag, the Southern Cross, and swore to defend their rights and liberties. They armed themselves and gathered inside a rough stockade at Eureka, where they waited for the government to make its move.

In the pre-dawn of Sunday 3 December 1854, a force of troopers attacked the stockade. It was all over in 15 terrifying minutes. The brutal and one-sided battle claimed the lives of 30 miners and five soldiers. But democracy was in the air and public opinion sided with the miners. When 13 of the rebels were tried for their lives, Melbourne juries set them free. Many Australians have found a kind of splendour in these events: the story of the Eureka Stockade is often told as a battle for nationhood and democracy – again illustrating the notion that any 'true' nation must

### 1880

Police capture the notorious bushranger Ned Kelly at the Victorian town of Glenrowan.

Kelly is hanged as a criminal – and remembered by the people as a folk hero.

### 1895

Publication of AB 'Banjo' Paterson's ballad *The Man from Snowy River*. Paterson and his rival Henry Lawson lead the literary movement that creates the legend of the Australian bush.

### 1901

The Australian colonies form a federation of states. The federal parliament sits in Melbourne, where it passes the *Immigration Restriction Act* – aka the White Australia policy.

### 1915

On 25 April the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (the Anzacs) joins an ambitious British attempt to invade Turkey. The ensuing military disaster at Gallipoli spawns a nationalist legend.

be born out of blood. But these killings were tragically unnecessary. The eastern colonies were already in the process of establishing democratic parliaments, with the full support of the British authorities. In the 1880s Peter Lalor himself became speaker of the Victorian parliament.

The gold rush had also attracted boatloads of prospectors from China. These Asians sometimes endured serious hostility from whites, and were the victims of ugly race riots on the goldfields at Lambing Flat (now called Young) in NSW in 1860–61. Chinese precincts soon developed in the backstreets of Sydney and Melbourne, and popular literature indulged in tales of Chinese opium dens, dingy gambling parlours and brothels. But many Chinese went on to establish themselves in business and, particularly, in market gardening. Today the busy Chinatowns of the capital cities and the presence of Chinese restaurants in towns across the country are reminders of the vigorous role of the Chinese in Australia since the 1850s.

Gold and wool brought immense investment and gusto to Melbourne and Sydney. By the 1880s they were stylish modern cities, with gaslights in the streets, railways, electricity and that great new invention, the telegraph. In fact, the southern capital became known as ‘Marvellous Melbourne’, so opulent were its theatres, hotels, galleries and fashions. But the economy was overheating. Many politicians and speculators were engaged in corrupt land deals, while investors poured money into wild and fanciful ventures. It could not last.

## Meanwhile, in the West...

Western Australia (WA) lagged behind the eastern colonies by about 50 years. Though Perth was settled by genteel colonists back in 1829, their material progress was handicapped by isolation, Aboriginal resistance and the arid climate. It was not until the 1880s that the discovery of remote goldfields promised to gild the fortunes of the isolated colony. At the time, the west was just entering its own period of self-government, and its first premier was a forceful, weather-beaten explorer named John Forrest. He saw that the mining industry would fail if the government did not provide a first-class harbour, efficient railways and reliable water supplies. Ignoring the threats of private contractors, he appointed the brilliant engineer CY O'Connor to design and build each of these as government projects.

## Growing Nationalism

By the end of the 19th century, Australian nationalists tended to idealise ‘the bush’ and its people. The great forum for this ‘bush nationalism’ was the massively popular *Bulletin* magazine. Its politics were egalitarian, democratic and republican, and its pages were filled with humour and

### Best History Museums

Rocks Discovery Museum, Sydney

Mawson's Huts Replica Museum, Hobart

Museum of Sydney

Commissariat Store, Brisbane

The hard-fought biennial ‘Ashes’ Test cricket series between Australia and England has been played since 1882. Despite long periods of dominance by both sides, at the time of writing the ledger stands at 32 series wins to Australia, 31 to England.

1919

Australian aviators Ross and Keith Smith become national heroes after they fly their Vickers Vimy biplane from England to Australia. Both receive knighthoods for their efforts.

1929

America's Great Depression spreads to Australia, where many working-class families are thrown into poverty. The violence and suffering of this period imprint themselves on the public memory.

1932

NSW firebrand premier Jack Lang is upstaged when a right-wing activist named Francis de Groot, wearing military uniform and riding a horse, cuts the ribbon to open the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

1936

The last captive thylacine (aka Tasmanian tiger) dies in a Hobart zoo. It's possible thylacines survived in the wild for subsequent decades, but extensive searches have failed to deliver credible evidence.

Two very different, intelligent introductions to Australian history are Stuart Macintyre's *A Concise History of Australia* and Geoffrey Blainey's *A Shorter History of Australia*.

Members of the Palawa Aboriginal community in Tasmania are attempting to piece together a generic Tasmanian Aboriginal language called 'palawa kani', based on records of Indigenous languages on the island. The last native speaker of original Tasmanian language died in 1905.

sentiment about daily life, written by a swag of writers, most notably Henry Lawson and AB 'Banjo' Paterson.

The 1890s were also a time of great trauma. As the speculative boom came crashing down, unemployment and hunger dealt cruelly with working-class families in the eastern colonies. However, Australian workers had developed a fierce sense that they were entitled to share in the country's prosperity. As the depression deepened, trade unions became more militant in their defence of workers' rights. At the same time, activists intent on winning legal reform established the Australian Labor Party (ALP).

## Nationhood

On 1 January 1901 Australia became a federation. When the bewhiskered members of the new national parliament met in Melbourne, their first aim was to protect the identity and values of a European Australia from an influx of Asians and Pacific Islanders. Their solution was a law which became known as the White Australia policy. It became a racial tenet of faith in Australia for the next 70 years.

For whites who lived inside the charmed circle of citizenship, this was to be a model society, nestled in the skirts of the British Empire. Just one year later, white women won the right to vote in federal elections. In a series of radical innovations, the government introduced a broad social welfare scheme and it protected Australian wage levels with import tariffs. Its radical mixture of capitalist dynamism and socialist compassion became known as the 'Australian settlement'.

Meanwhile, most Australians lived on the coastal 'edge' of the continent. So forbidding was the arid, desolate inland that they called the great dry Lake Eyre 'the Dead Heart' of the country. It was a grim image – as if the heart muscle, which should pump the water of life through inland Australia, was dead. But one prime minister in particular, the dapper Alfred Deakin, dismissed such talk. He led the 'boosters' who were determined to triumph over this tyranny of the climate. Even before Federation, in the 1880s, Deakin championed irrigated farming on the Murray River at Mildura. Soon the district was green with grapevines and orchards.

## Entering the World Stage

Living on the edge of a dry and forbidding land, and isolated from the rest of the world, most Australians took comfort in the knowledge that they were a dominion of the British Empire. When war broke out in Europe in 1914, thousands of Australian men rallied to the Empire's call. They had their first taste of death on 25 April 1915, when the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (the Anzacs) joined thousands of other

**1939**

Prime Minister Robert Menzies announces that Britain has gone to war with Hitler's Germany and that 'as a result, Australia is also at war'.

**1941**

The Japanese attack Pearl Harbor and sweep through Southeast Asia. Australia discovers that it has been abandoned by traditional ally Britain. Instead, it welcomes US forces, based in Australia.

**1945**

WWII ends. Australia adopts a new slogan, 'Populate or Perish'. Over the next 30 years more than two million immigrants arrive. One-third are British.

**1948**

Cricketer Don Bradman retires with an unsurpassed test average of 99.94 runs. South African batsman Graeme Pollock is next in line, having retired in 1970 with a relatively paltry average of 60.97.

British and French troops in an assault on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey. It was eight months before the British commanders acknowledged that the tactic had failed. By then 8141 young Australians were dead. Before long the Australian Imperial Force was fighting in the killing fields of Europe. By the time the war ended, 60,000 Australian men had died. Ever since, on 25 April, Australians have gathered at war memorials around the country for the sad and solemn services of Anzac Day.

In the 1920s Australia embarked on a decade of chaotic change. Cars began to rival horses on the highway. In the new cinemas, young Australians enjoyed American movies. In an atmosphere of sexual freedom not equalled until the 1960s, young people partied and danced to American jazz. At the same time, popular enthusiasm for the British Empire grew more intense – as if imperial fervour were an antidote to grief. As radicals and reactionaries clashed, Australia careered wildly through the 1920s until it collapsed into the abyss of the Great Depression in 1929. World prices for wheat and wool plunged. Unemployment brought its shame and misery to one in three households. Once again working people experienced the cruelty of a system which treated them as expendable. For those who were wealthy – or who had jobs – the Depression was hardly noticed. In fact, the extreme deflation of the economy actually meant that the purchasing power of their wages was enhanced.

The year 1932 saw accusations of treachery on the cricket field. The English team, under their captain Douglas Jardine, employed a violent new bowling tactic known as 'bodyline'. The aim was to unnerve Australia's star batsman, the devastatingly efficient Donald Bradman. The bitterness of the tour provoked a diplomatic crisis with Britain, and became part of Australian legend. And Bradman batted on. When he retired in 1948 he had an unsurpassed career average of 99.94 runs.

## War with Japan

After 1933, the economy began to recover. The whirl of daily life was hardly dampened when Hitler hurled Europe into a new war in 1939. Though Australians had long feared Japan, they took it for granted that the British navy would keep them safe. In December 1941 Japan bombed the US Fleet at Pearl Harbor. Weeks later, the 'impregnable' British naval base in Singapore crumbled, and before long thousands of Australians and other Allied troops were enduring the savagery of Japanese prisoner-of-war camps.

As the Japanese swept through Southeast Asia and into Papua New Guinea, the British announced that they could not spare any resources to defend Australia. But the legendary US commander General Douglas MacArthur saw that Australia was the perfect base for American

The most accessible version of the Anzac legend is Peter Weir's Australian epic film *Gallipoli* (1981), with a cast that includes a fresh-faced Mel Gibson.

The massive Murray River spans three states (New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia) and is navigable for 1986 of its 2756km: for half a century from 1853 it acted as a watery highway into inland Australia.

### 1956

The Olympic Games are held in Melbourne. The Olympic flame is lit by running champion Ron Clarke, and Australia finishes third on the medal tally with an impressive 13 golds.

### 1965

Prime Minister Menzies commits Australian troops to the American war in Vietnam, and divides the nation. A total of 426 Australians were killed in action, with a further 2940 wounded.

### 1967

White Australians vote to grant citizenship to Indigenous Australians. The words 'other than the Aboriginal race in any State' are removed from citizenship qualifications in the Australian Constitution.

### 1973

After a conflict-ridden construction which included the sacking of Danish architect Jørn Utzon, the Sydney Opera House opens for business. This iconic building was granted World Heritage status in 2007.

## PHAR LAP'S LAST LAP

In the midst of the Depression-era hardship, sport brought escape to Australians in love with games and gambling. A powerful chestnut horse called Phar Lap won race after race, culminating in an effortless and graceful victory in the 1930 Melbourne Cup (this annual event is still known as 'the race that stops a nation'). In 1932 the great horse travelled to the racetracks of America, where he mysteriously died. In Australia, the gossips insisted that the horse had been poisoned by envious Americans. And the legend grew of a sporting hero cut down in his prime. Phar Lap was stuffed and is a revered exhibit at the Melbourne Museum; his skeleton has been returned to his birthplace, New Zealand.

operations in the Pacific. In a series of fierce battles on sea and land, Allied forces gradually turned back the Japanese advance. Importantly, it was the USA, not the British Empire, that saved Australia. The days of the alliance with Britain alone were numbered.

## Visionary Peace

When WWII ended, a new slogan rang through the land: 'Populate or Perish!' The Australian government embarked on an ambitious scheme to attract thousands of immigrants. With government assistance, people flocked from Britain and from non-English-speaking countries. They included Greeks, Italians, Slavs, Serbs, Croatians, Dutch and Poles, followed by Turks, Lebanese and many others. These 'new Australians' were expected to assimilate into a suburban stereotype known as the 'Austral-ian way of life'.

Many migrants found jobs in the growing manufacturing sector, in which companies such as General Motors and Ford operated with generous tariff support. In addition, the government embarked on audacious public works schemes, notably the mighty Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme in the mountains near Canberra. Today, environmentalists point out the devastation caused by this huge network of tunnels, dams and power stations. But the Snowy scheme was an expression of a new-found optimism and testifies to the cooperation among the men of many nations who laboured on the project.

This era of growth and prosperity was dominated by Robert Menzies, the founder of the modern Liberal Party and Australia's longest-serving prime minister. Menzies was steeped in British history and tradition, and liked to play the part of a sentimental monarchist. He was also a vigilant opponent of communism. As Asia succumbed to the chill of the Cold War, Australia and New Zealand entered a formal military alliance with the USA – the 1951 Anzus security pact. When the USA hurled its

A wonderful novel set in wartime Brisbane is *Johnno* (1975), the first novel by David Malouf, one of Australia's most acclaimed writers.

### 1975

Against a background of radical reform and uncontrolled inflation, Governor-General Sir John Kerr sacks Labor's Whitlam government and orders a federal election, which the conservatives win.

### 1979

Despite heated protests from environmental groups, the federal government grants authorisation for the Ranger consortium to mine uranium in the Northern Territory.

### 1979

After a federal government inquiry in 1978, whaling is banned in Australian waters, the last legally killed whale meeting its maker in November 1979.

### 1983

Tasmanian government plans for a hydro-electric dam on the wild Franklin River dominate a federal election campaign. Supporting a 'No Dams' policy, Labor's Bob Hawke becomes prime minister.

righteous fury into a civil war in Vietnam, Menzies committed Australian forces to the battle, introducing conscription for military service overseas. The following year Menzies retired, leaving his successors a bitter legacy. The antiwar movement split Australia.

There was a feeling too among many artists, intellectuals and the young that Menzies' Australia had become a rather dull, complacent country, more in love with American and British culture than with its own talents and stories. In an atmosphere of youthful rebellion and new-found nationalism, the Labor Party was elected to power in 1972 under the leadership of a brilliant, idealistic lawyer named Gough Whitlam. In just four short years his government transformed the country. He ended conscription and abolished all university fees. He introduced a free universal health scheme, no-fault divorce, the principle of Aboriginal land rights and equal pay for women. The White Australia policy had been gradually falling into disuse; under Whitlam it was finally abandoned altogether. By now, around one million migrants had arrived from non-English-speaking countries, and they had filled Australia with new languages, cultures, foods and ideas. Under Whitlam this achievement was embraced as 'multiculturalism'.

By 1975 the Whitlam government was rocked by a tempest of inflation and scandal. At the end of 1975 his government was controversially dismissed from office by the governor-general. But the general thrust of Whitlam's social reforms was continued by his successors. The principle of Aboriginal land rights was expanded. From the 1970s Asian immigration increased, and multiculturalism became a new Australian orthodoxy. China and Japan far outstripped Europe as major trading partners – Australia's economic future lay in Asia.

## Contemporary Challenges

Today Australia faces new challenges. In the 1970s the country began dismantling its protectionist scaffolding. New efficiency brought new prosperity. At the same time, wages and working conditions, which were once protected by an independent tribunal, became more vulnerable as egalitarianism gave way to competition. And after two centuries of development, the strains on the environment were starting to show – on water supplies, forests, soils, air quality and the oceans.

Under the conservative John Howard, Australia's second-longest-serving prime minister (1996–2007), the country grew closer than ever to the USA, joining the Americans in their war in Iraq. The government's harsh treatment of asylum seekers, its refusal to acknowledge the reality of climate change, its anti-union reforms and the prime minister's lack of empathy with Indigenous Australians dismayed more liberal-minded Australians. But Howard presided over a period of economic growth that

During WWII, Darwin in the Northern Territory was comprehensively bombed in 64 Japanese air raids (1942–43). Contrary to reports of 17 deaths, 243 people were killed, hundreds were injured and half the population fled to Adelaide River. Darwin was also flattened by Cyclone Tracy on Christmas morning, 1974.

British scientists detonated seven nuclear bombs at Maralinga in remote South Australia in the 1950s and early 1960s, with devastating effects on the local Maralinga Tjarutja people. Lesser-known are the three nuclear tests carried out in the Montebello Islands in Western Australia in the 1950s: a good read on the subject is Robert Drewe's *Montebello* (2012).

1992

Directly overturning the established principle of 'terra nullius', the High Court of Australia recognises the principle of native title in the Mabo decision.

2000

The Sydney Olympic Games are a triumph of spectacle and good will. Aboriginal running champ Cathy Freeman lights the flame at the opening ceremony and wins gold in the 400m event.

2007

Kevin Rudd is elected Australian prime minister. Marking a change of direction from his conservative predecessor, Rudd says 'sorry' to Indigenous Australians and ratifies the Kyoto Protocol on climate change.

2009

On 7 February Australia experiences its worst loss of life in a natural disaster when 400 bushfires kill 173 people in country Victoria. The day is known thereafter as 'Black Saturday'.

In Melbourne you can learn about others who have come to Australia at the excellent Chinese and Immigration Museums ([www.chinesemuseum.com.au](http://www.chinesemuseum.com.au) and [www.museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum](http://www.museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum)).

emphasised the values of self-reliance and won him continuing support in middle Australia.

In 2007 Howard was defeated by the Labor Party's Kevin Rudd, an ex-diplomat who immediately issued a formal apology to Indigenous Australians for the injustices they had suffered over the past two centuries. Though it promised sweeping reforms in environment and education, the Rudd government found itself faced with a crisis when the world economy crashed in 2008; by 2010 it had cost Rudd his position. Incoming Prime Minister Julia Gillard, along with other world leaders, now faced three related challenges – climate change, a diminishing oil supply and a shrinking economy. This difficult landscape, shrinking popularity and ongoing agitations to return Rudd to the top job saw Gillard toppled and Rudd reinstated in 2013. Rudd then lost government in late 2013 to Tony Abbott's conservative Liberal-National Party Coalition.

Lonely Planet

## 2010

Australia's first female prime minister, Julia Gillard, is sworn in. Born in Wales, Gillard and her family emigrated to Australia's warmer climate due to her poor health as a child.

## 2011

Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Yasi makes land-fall at Mission Beach on the north Queensland coast, causing mass devastation to property, infrastructure and crops.

## 2013

After widespread flooding in 2011, Queensland is again inundated as ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald passed through; Bundaberg is particularly badly affected. The total damage bill is estimated at \$2.4 billion.

## 2014

New conservative Prime Minister Tony Abbott commits RAAF combat aircraft and army special forces advisers to a multinational military operation against Islamic extremists in Iraq.

# Aboriginal Australia

by Cathy Craigie

**No visit to Australia would be complete without experiencing the rich cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Here is an opportunity to learn from the oldest continuous cultures in the world and share a way of life that has existed for more than 50,000 years. From the cities to the bush, there are opportunities to get up close with Australia's Indigenous people. Visit an art gallery or museum, or book a tour of Aboriginal lands. There is so much on offer for a truly unique Australian experience.**

## Aboriginal Culture

Aboriginal cultures have evolved over thousands of years with strong links to the spiritual, economic and social lives of the people. This heritage has been kept alive through an oral tradition, with knowledge and skills passed on from one generation to the next through rituals, art, cultural material and language. Language has played an important part in preserving Aboriginal cultures.

Today there is a national movement to revive Aboriginal languages and a strong Aboriginal art sector. Traditional knowledge is being used in science, natural resource management and government programs. Aboriginal culture has never been static, and continues to evolve with the changing times and environment. New technologies and media are now used to tell Aboriginal stories, and cultural tourism ventures, through which visitors can experience an Aboriginal perspective, have been established. You can learn about ancestral beings at particular natural landmarks, look at rock art that is thousands of years old, taste traditional foods or attend an Aboriginal festival or performance.

Government support for cultural programs is sporadic and depends on the political climate at the time. However, Aboriginal people are determined to maintain their links with the past and to also use their cultural knowledge to shape a better future.

## The Land

Aboriginal culture views humans as part of the ecology, not separate from it. Everything is connected, a whole environment that sustains the spiritual, economic and cultural lives of the people. In turn, Aboriginal people have sustained the land over thousands of years, through knowledge passed on in ceremonies, rituals, songs and stories. For Aboriginal people land is intrinsically connected to identity and spirituality. All land in Australia is reflected in Aboriginal lore but particular places may be significant for religious and cultural beliefs. Some well-known sites are the Three Sisters in the Blue Mountains, and Warreen Cave in Tasmania with artefacts dated around 40,000 years old.

Sacred sites can be parts of rocks, hills, trees or water and are associated with an ancestral being or an event that occurred. Often these sites are part of a Dreaming story and link people across areas. The ranges around Alice Springs are part of the caterpillar Dreaming with many

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Cathy Craigie is a Gamilaori/Anaiwon woman from northern New South Wales. She is a freelance writer and cultural consultant and has extensive experience in Aboriginal Affairs.

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## TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS

Aboriginal society is a diverse group of several hundred sovereign nations. Torres Strait Islanders are a Melanesian people with a separate culture from that of Aboriginal Australians, though they have a shared history. Together, these two groups form Australia's Indigenous peoples. While this chapter touches on broader Indigenous issues relating to both groups, it focuses primarily on mainland Australia, which is Aboriginal land.

Aboriginal art is not just dot painting, dancing and didgeridoo, but a living and dynamic culture. It is the perfect vehicle through which to engage with Aboriginal people. Koori Heritage Trust ([www.koorieheritage.com](http://www.koorieheritage.com)) is a one-stop shop for Victorian Aboriginal culture.

sites including Akeyulerre (Billy Goat Hill), Atnelkentyarliweke (Anzac Hill) and rock paintings at Emily Gap. The most well known are Uluru (Ayers Rock) and Kata Tjuta (The Olgas); the latter is the home of the snake Wanambi. His breath is the wind that blows through the gorge. Pirla Wara Wara, a significant site in the Tanami Desert for Warlpiri people, is 435 km northwest of Alice and is where several Walpiri Dreaming stories meet.

Cultural tours to Aboriginal sites provide opportunities to learn about plants and animals, hunting and fishing, bush food or dance.

Please note that many Aboriginal sites are protected by law and are not to be disturbed in any way.

## The Arts

Aboriginal art has impacted the Australian cultural landscape and is now showcased at national and international events and celebrated as a significant part of Australian culture. It still retains the role of passing on knowledge but today it is also important for economic, educational and political reasons. Art has been used to raise awareness of issues such as health and has been a primary tool for the reconciliation process in Australia. In many communities art has become a major source of employment and income.

## Visual Arts

It is difficult to define Aboriginal art as one style because form and practice vary from one area to another. From the traditional forms of rock art, carving and body decoration, a dynamic contemporary art industry has grown into one of the success stories of Aboriginal Australia.

## Rock Art

Rock art is the oldest form of human art, and Aboriginal rock art stretches back thousands of years. It is found in every state of Australia. For Aboriginal people, rock art is a direct link with life before Europeans. The art and the process of making it are part of songs, stories and customs that connect the people to the land. There are a number of different styles of rock art across Australia. These include engravings in sandstone, and stencils, prints and drawings in rock shelters. Aboriginal people carried out rock art for several reasons, including as part of a ritual or ceremony and to record events.

Some of the oldest examples of engravings can be found in the Pilbara in Western Australia (WA) and in Olary in South Australia (SA) where there is an engraving of a crocodile. This is quite amazing as crocodiles are not found in this part of Australia. The Kimberley rock art centres on the Wandjina, the ancestral creation spirits. All national parks surrounding Sydney have rock engravings and can be easily accessed and viewed. At Gariwerd (the Grampians) in Victoria there are hand prints and hand stencils. Aboriginal-owned tour company Guurrbi Tours (p442) guide visitors to the Wangaar-Wuri painted rock art sites near Cooktown in Queensland.

The Cairns Indigenous Art Fair ([www.ciaf.com.au](http://www.ciaf.com.au)) has more than 300 Aboriginal artists showcasing work over three days. Held in August, the fair attracts thousands of visitors and is a great opportunity to see and purchase some of the best art in the country.

In the Northern Territory (NT) many of the rock-art sites have patterns and symbols that appear in paintings, carvings and other cultural material. Kakadu National Park has over 5000 recorded sites but many more are thought to exist. Some of these sites are 20,000 years old. Kakadu is World Heritage listed and is internationally recognised for its cultural significance.

In central Australia rock paintings still have religious significance. Here, people still retouch the art as part of ritual and to connect them to the stories. In most other areas people no longer paint rock images but instead work on bark, paper and canvas.

If you visit rock art sites, please do not touch or damage the art, and respect the sites and the surrounding areas.

### Contemporary Art

The contemporary art industry started in a tiny community called Papunya in central Australia. It was occupied by residents from several language groups who had been displaced from their traditional lands. In 1971 an art teacher at Papunya school encouraged painting and some senior men took interest. This started the process of transferring sand and body drawings onto modern media and the 'dot and circle' style of contemporary painting began. The emergence of 'dot' paintings has been described as the greatest art movement of the 20th century and Papunya Tula artists became a model for other Aboriginal communities.

The National Gallery of Australia in Canberra has a fantastic collection, but contemporary Aboriginal art can also be viewed at any public art gallery or in one of the many independent galleries dealing in Aboriginal work. Contemporary artists work in all media and Aboriginal art has appeared on unconventional surfaces such as a BMW car and a Qantas plane. The central desert area is still a hub for Aboriginal art and Alice Springs is one of the best places to see and buy art. Cairns is another hotspot for innovative Aboriginal art.

If you are buying art make sure that provenance of the work is included. This tells the artist's name, their community/language group and the story of the work. If it is an authentic work, all proceeds go back to the artist. Australia has a resale royalty scheme.

### Music

Music has always been a vital part of Aboriginal culture. Songs were important for teaching and passing on knowledge and musical instruments were often used in healing, ceremonies and rituals. The most well known instrument is the *yidaki* or didgeridoo, which was traditionally only played by men in northern Australia. Other instruments included clapsticks, rattles and boomerangs; in southern Australia animal skins were stretched across the lap to make a drumming sound.

This rich musical heritage continues today with a strong contemporary music industry. Like other art forms, Aboriginal music has developed into a fusion of new ideas and styles mixed with strong cultural identity.

## KEY EVENTS

### 1928

Anthony Martin Fernando, the first Aboriginal activist to campaign internationally against racial discrimination in Australia, is arrested for protesting outside Australia House in London.

### 26 January 1938

To mark the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the British, the Aborigines Progressive Association holds a meeting in Australia Hall in Sydney, called 'A Day of Mourning and Protest'.

### 15 August 1963

A bark petition is presented to the House of Representatives from the people of Yirrikala in the Northern Territory, objecting to mining on their land, which the federal government had approved without consultation.

### 27 May 1967

A federal referendum allows the Commonwealth to make laws on Aboriginal issues and include them in the national census. They will now have the same citizen rights as other Australians.

### 12 July 1971

The Aboriginal flag first flies on National Aborigines Day in Adelaide. Designed by central Australian man Harold Thomas, the flag has become a unifying symbol of identity for Aboriginal people.

### 26 January 1972

The Aboriginal Tent Embassy is set up on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra to oppose the treatment of Aboriginal people and the government's recent rejection of a proposal for Aboriginal Land Rights.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF STORYTELLING

Aboriginal people had an oral culture so storytelling was an important way to learn. Stories gave meaning to life and were used to teach the messages of the spirit ancestors. Although beliefs and cultural practices vary according to region and language groups, there is a common world-view that these ancestors created the land, the sea and all living things. This is often referred to as the Dreaming. Through stories, the knowledge and beliefs are passed on from one generation to another and set out the social mores. They also recall events from the past. Today artists have continued this tradition but are using new media events such as film and writing. The first Aboriginal writer to be published was David Unaipon, a Ngarrindjeri man from South Australia (SA) who was a writer, scientist and advocate for his people. Born in 1872, he published *Aboriginal Legends* (1927) and *Native Legends* (1929).

Other early published writers were Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Kevin Gilbert and Jack Davis. Contemporary writers of note include Alexis Wright, Kim Scott, Anita Heiss and Ali Cobby Eckerman. Award-winning novels to read are Kim Scott's *Deadman Dancing* (Picador Australia) and *Benang* (Fremantle Press), Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* (Giramando) and Ali Cobby Eckerman's *Little Bit Long Time* (Picaro Press) and *Ruby Moonlight* (Magabala Books).

Contemporary artists such as Dan Sultan and Jessica Mauboy have crossed over successfully into the mainstream and have won major music awards and can be seen regularly on popular programs and at major music festivals. Aboriginal radio is the best and most accessible way to hear Aboriginal music.

### Performing Arts

Dance and theatre are a vital part of Aboriginal culture. Traditional styles varied from one nation to the next; imitation of animals, birds and the elements was common across all nations, but arm, leg and body movements differed greatly. Ceremonial or ritual dances, often telling stories to pass on knowledge, were highly structured and were distinct from the social dancing at corroborees (festive events). Like other art forms, dance has adapted to the modern world, with contemporary dance groups bringing a modern interpretation to traditional forms. The most well-known dance company is the internationally acclaimed Bangarra Dance Theatre (p128).

Theatre also draws on the storytelling tradition, where drama and dance came together in ceremonies or corroborees, and this still occurs in many contemporary productions. Today, Australia has a thriving Aboriginal theatre industry and many Aboriginal actors and writers work in or collaborate with mainstream productions. There are two major Aboriginal theatre companies, Ilbijerri ([www.ilbijerri.com.au](http://www.ilbijerri.com.au)) in Melbourne and Yirra Yakin ([www.yirrayaakin.com.au](http://www.yirrayaakin.com.au)) in Perth, as well as several mainstream companies specialising in Aboriginal stories who have had successful productions in Australia and overseas.

### TV, Radio & Film

Aboriginal people have quickly adapted to electronic broadcasting and have developed an extensive media network of radio, print and television services. There are more than 120 Aboriginal radio stations and programs operating across Australia – in cities, rural areas and remote communities. Program formats differ from location to location. Some broadcast only in Aboriginal languages or cater to specific music tastes.

Aboriginal radio is the best and most accessible way to hear Aboriginal music. From its base in Brisbane, The National Indigenous Radio

Described by *Rolling Stone* magazine as 'Australia's Most Important Voice', blind singer Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu ([www.gurrumul.com](http://www.gurrumul.com)) sings in the Yolngu language from Arnhem Land. His angelic voice tells of identity, connecting with land and ancestral beings. Gurrumul has entranced Australian and overseas audiences and reached platinum with his two albums.

Service (NIRS; [www.nirs.org.au](http://www.nirs.org.au)) broadcasts four radio channels of Aboriginal content via satellite and over the internet.

There is a thriving Aboriginal film industry and in recent years feature films such as *The Sapphires*, *Bran Nue Day* and *Samson and Delilah* have had mainstream success. Since the first Aboriginal television channel, NITV, was launched in 2007, there has been a growth in the number of film-makers wanting to tell their stories.

## History of Aboriginal Australia

Before the coming of Europeans, culture was the common link for Aboriginal people across Australia. There were many aspects that were common to all the Aboriginal nations and it was through these commonalities that Aboriginal people were able to interact with each other. In postcolonial Australia it is also the shared history that binds Aboriginal people.

### First Australians

Many academics believe Aboriginal people came here from somewhere else, with scientific evidence placing Aboriginal people on the continent at least 40,000 to 50,000 years ago. However, Aboriginal people believe they have always inhabited the land.

At the time of European contact the Aboriginal population was grouped into 300 or more different nations with distinct languages and land boundaries. Most Aboriginal people did not have permanent shelters but moved within their territory and followed seasonal patterns of animal migration and plant availability. The diversity of landscapes in Australia meant that each nation varied in their lifestyles. Although these nations were distinct cultural groups, there were also many common elements. Each nation had several clans or family groups who were responsible for looking after specific areas. For thousands of years Aboriginal people lived within a complex kinship system that tied them to the natural environment. From the desert to the sea Aboriginal people shaped their lives according to their environments and developed different skills and a wide body of knowledge on their territory.

### Colonised

The effects of colonisation started immediately after the Europeans arrived. It began with the appropriation of land and water resources and an epidemic of diseases. Smallpox killed around half of the Sydney Harbour natives. A period of resistance occurred as Aboriginal people fought back to retain their land and way of life. As violence and massacres swept the country, many Aboriginal people were pushed away from their traditional lands. Over a century, the Aboriginal population was decimated by 90%.

By the late 1800s most of the fertile land had been taken and most Aboriginal people were living in poverty on the fringes of settlements or on land unsuitable for settlement. Aboriginal people had to adapt to the

### 10 August 1987

A Royal Commission investigates the high number of Aboriginal deaths in custody. Aboriginal people continue to be over-represented in the criminal system today.

### 3 June 1992

The previous legal concept of terra nullius is overturned by the Australian High Court, declaring Australia was occupied before the British settlement.

### 26 January 1988

On Australia's bicentenary, more than 40,000 Aboriginal people and their supporters march in Sydney to mark the 200-year anniversary of invasion.

### 28 May 2000

More than 300,000 people walk across Sydney Harbour Bridge to highlight the need for reconciliation between Aboriginal people and other Australians.

### 21 June 2007

The federal government suspends the Racial Discrimination Act to implement a large-scale intervention addressing child abuse in NT Aboriginal communities.

### 13 February 2008

The Prime Minister of Australia makes a national apology to Aboriginal people for the forced removal of their children and the injustices that occurred.

### 10 July 2010

Aboriginal leader Yagan is put to rest in a Perth park bearing his name. Murdered in 1833, his head had been sent to England.

### 22 January 2015

A Barnagarla native title claim over a vast section of South Australia's Eyre Peninsula is upheld in the Federal Court.

## THE STOLEN GENERATIONS

When Australia became a Federation in 1901, a government policy known as the 'White Australia policy' was put in place. It was implemented to restrict non-white immigration to Australia but the policy also impacted on Aboriginal Australia. Assimilation into the broader society was 'encouraged' by all sectors of government with the intent to eventually fade out the Aboriginal race. A policy of forcibly removing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families was official from 1909 to 1969, although the practice was happening before and after those years. Although accurate numbers will never be known, it is estimated that around 100,000 Aboriginal children were taken from their families (or one in three children).

A government agency, the Aborigines Protection Board, was set up to manage the policy and had the power to remove children without consent from families or without a court order. Many children never saw their families again and those that did manage to find their way home often found it difficult to maintain relationships. The generations of children who were taken from their families became known as the Stolen Generations.

In the 1990s the Australian Human Rights Commission held an inquiry into the practice of removing Aboriginal children. The 'Bring Them Home' report was tabled in parliament in May 1997 and told of the devastating impact that these policies had on the children and their families. Governments, churches and welfare bodies all took part in the forced removal. Sexual and physical abuse and cruelty was common in many of the institutions where children were placed. Today many of the Stolen Generations still suffer trauma associated with their early lives.

On 13 February 2008 Kevin Rudd, the then prime minister of Australia, offered a national apology to the Stolen Generations. For many Aboriginal people it was the start of a national healing process and today there are many organisations working with the Stolen Generations.

new culture but had few to no rights. Employment opportunities were scarce and most worked as labourers or domestic staff. This disadvantage has continued and even though successive government policies and programs have been implemented to assist Aboriginal people, most have had little effect on improving lives.

### Rights & Reconciliation

The relationship between Aboriginal people and other Australians hasn't always been an easy one. Over the years several systematic policies have been put in place, but these have often had an underlying purpose including control over the land, decimating the population, protection, assimilation, self-determination and self-management.

The history of forced resettlement, removal of children, and the loss of land and culture can't be erased even with governments addressing some of the issues. Current policies focus on 'closing the gap' and centre on better delivery of essential services to improve lives, but there is still great disparity between Aboriginal people and other Australians, including lower standards of education, employment, health and living conditions, high incarceration and suicide rates, and a lower life expectancy.

Throughout all of this, Aboriginal people have managed to maintain their identity and link to Country and culture. Although there is a growing recognition and acceptance of Aboriginal people's place in this country, there is still a long way to go. Aboriginal people have no real political or economic wealth, but their struggle for legal and cultural rights continues today and is always at the forefront of politics. Any gains for Aboriginal people have been hard won and initiated by Aboriginal people themselves.

For an insight into the early days of British settlement and interaction with Aboriginal Australians, check the notebooks of William Dawes, officer of the First Fleet 1787–88. These diaries are accessible online ([www.williamdawes.org](http://www.williamdawes.org)) and contain words and phrases from the local Aboriginal language and aspects of traditional life. The principal informant was an Aboriginal girl, Patyegarang.

by Tim Flannery

**Australia's plants and animals are just about the closest things to alien life on Earth. That's because Australia has been isolated from the other continents for a very long time – around 80 million years. Unlike those on other habitable continents that have been linked by land bridges, Australia's birds, mammals, reptiles and plants have taken their own separate and very different evolutionary journey and the result today is the world's most distinct – and one of the most diverse – natural realms.**

## A Unique Environment

The first naturalists to investigate Australia were astonished by what they found. Here the swans were black – to Europeans this was a metaphor for the impossible – and mammals such as the platypus and echidna were discovered to lay eggs. It really was an upside-down world, where many of the larger animals hopped and where each year the trees shed their bark rather than their leaves.

If you are visiting Australia for a short time, you might need to go out of your way to experience some of the richness of the environment. That's because Australia is a subtle place, and some of the natural environment – especially around the cities – has been damaged or replaced by trees and creatures from Europe. Places such as Sydney, however, have preserved extraordinary fragments of their original environment that are relatively easy to access. Before you enjoy them though, it's worthwhile understanding the basics about how nature operates in Australia. This is important because there's nowhere like Australia, and once you have an insight into its origins and natural rhythms, you will appreciate the place so much more.

There are two important factors that go a long way towards explaining nature in Australia: its soils and its climate. Both are unique.

## Climate

Australia's misfortune in respect to soils is echoed in its climate. In most parts of the world outside the wet tropics, life responds to the rhythm of the seasons – summer to winter, or wet to dry. Most of Australia experiences seasons – sometimes severe ones – yet life does not respond solely to them. This can clearly be seen by the fact that although there's plenty of snow and cold country in Australia, there are almost no trees that shed their leaves in winter, nor do many Australian animals hibernate. Instead there is a far more potent climatic force that Australian life must obey: El Niño.

El Niño is a complex climatic pattern that can cause major weather shifts around the South Pacific. The cycle of flood and drought that El Niño brings to Australia is profound. Our rivers – even the mighty Murray River, the nation's largest, which runs through the southeast – can be miles wide one year, yet you can literally step over its flow the next. This is the power of El Niño, and its effect, when combined with Australia's poor soils, manifests itself compellingly.

Tim Flannery is a scientist, explorer, writer and the chief councillor of the independent Climate Council. He was a professor of science at Macquarie University in Sydney until 2013 and was named Australian of the Year in 2007. He has written several award-winning books including *The Future Eaters*, *Throwim Way Leg* (an account of his work as a biologist in New Guinea) and *The Weather Makers*.

## ENVIRONMENT & CONSERVATION GROUPS

- ➔ The **Australian Conservation Foundation** ([www.actonline.org.au](http://www.actonline.org.au)) is Australia's largest nongovernment organisation involved in protecting the environment.
- ➔ **Bush Heritage Australia** ([www.bushheritage.org.au](http://www.bushheritage.org.au)) and **Australian Wildlife Conservancy** (AWC; [www.australianwildlife.org](http://www.australianwildlife.org)) allow people to donate funds and time to conserving native species.
- ➔ **Conservation Volunteers Australia** ([conservationvolunteers.com.au](http://conservationvolunteers.com.au)) is a nonprofit organisation focusing on practical conservation projects such as tree planting, walking-track construction, and flora and fauna surveys.
- ➔ **Ecotourism Australia** ([www.ecotourism.org.au](http://www.ecotourism.org.au)) has an accreditation system for environmentally friendly and sustainable tourism in Australia, and lists ecofriendly tours, accommodation and attractions by state.
- ➔ **Wilderness Society** ([wilderness.org.au](http://wilderness.org.au)) focuses on protecting wilderness and forests.

## Fauna & Flora

Australia's wildlife and plant species are as diverse as they are perfectly adapted to the country's soils and climate.

### Mammals

#### Kangaroos

Australia is, of course, famous as the home of the kangaroo (roo) and other marsupials. Unless you visit a wildlife park, such creatures are not easy to see as most are nocturnal. Their lifestyles, however, are exquisitely attuned to Australia's harsh conditions. Have you ever wondered why kangaroos, alone among the world's larger mammals, hop? It turns out it's the most efficient way to get about at medium speeds. This is because the energy of the bounce is stored in the tendons of the legs – much like in a pogo stick – while the intestines bounce up and down like a piston, emptying and filling the lungs without needing to activate the chest muscles. When you travel long distances to find meagre feed, such efficiency is a must.

#### Koalas

Marsupials are so energy-efficient that they need to eat one-fifth less food than equivalent-sized placental mammals (everything from bats to rats, whales and ourselves). But some marsupials have taken energy efficiency much further. If you visit a wildlife park or zoo you might notice that faraway look in a koala's eyes. It seems as if nobody is home – and this in fact is near the truth. Several years ago biologists announced that koalas are the only living creatures that have brains that don't fit their skulls. Instead they have a shrivelled walnut of a brain that rattles around in a fluid-filled cranium. Other researchers have contested this finding, however, pointing out that the brains of the koalas examined for the study may have shrunk because these organs are so soft. Whether soft-brained or empty-headed, there is no doubt that the koala is not the Einstein of the animal world, and we now believe that it has sacrificed its brain to energy efficiency. Brains cost a lot to run. Koalas eat gum leaves, which are so toxic that they use 20% of their energy just detoxifying this food. This leaves little energy for the brain; fortunately, living in the treetops where there are so few predators means that they can get by with few wits at all.

#### Wombats

The peculiar constraints of the Australian environment have not made everything dumb. The koala's nearest relative, the wombat (of which there are three species), has a large brain for a marsupial. These creatures live in complex burrows and can weigh up to 35kg, making them

The website of the Australian Museum ([www.australianmuseum.net.au](http://www.australianmuseum.net.au)) holds a wealth of info on Australia's animal life from the Cretaceous period until now. Kids can get stuck into online games, fact files and movies.

the largest herbivorous burrowers on earth. Because their burrows are effectively air-conditioned, they have the neat trick of turning down their metabolic activity when they are in residence. One physiologist, who studied their thyroid hormones, found that biological activity ceased to such an extent in sleeping wombats that, from a hormonal point of view, they appeared to be dead! Wombats can remain underground for a week at a time, and can get by on just one-third of the food needed by a sheep of equivalent size. One day, perhaps, efficiency-minded farmers will keep wombats instead of sheep. At the moment, however, that isn't possible; the largest of the wombat species, the northern hairy-nose, is one of the world's rarest creatures, with only around 160 surviving in a remote nature reserve in central Queensland.

### Other Mammals

Among the more common marsupials you might catch a glimpse of in the national parks around Australia's major cities are the species of antechinus. These nocturnal, rat-sized creatures lead an extraordinary life. The males live for just 11 months, the first 10 of which consist of a concentrated burst of eating and growing. The day comes when their minds turn to sex, and in the antechinus this becomes an obsession. As they embark on their quest for females they forget to eat and sleep. By the end of August – just two weeks after they reach 'puberty' – every male is dead, exhausted by sex and by carrying around swollen testes.

Two unique monotremes (egg-laying mammals) live in Australia: the bumbling echidna, something akin to a hedgehog; and the platypus, a bit like an otter, with webbed feet and a ducklike bill. Echidnas are common along bushland trails, but platypuses are elusive, seen at dawn and dusk in quiet rivers and streams.

If you are very lucky, you might see a honey possum. This tiny marsupial is an enigma. Somehow it gets all of its dietary requirements from nectar and pollen, and in the southwest there are always enough flowers around for it to survive. But no one knows why the males need sperm larger even than those of the blue whale, or why their testes are so massive. Were humans as well endowed, men would be walking around with the equivalent of a 4kg bag of potatoes between their legs!

### Reptiles

One thing you will see lots of in Australia are reptiles. Snakes are abundant, and they include some of the most venomous species known. Where the opportunities to feed are few and far between, it's best not to give your prey a second chance, hence the potent venom. Snakes will usually leave you alone if you don't fool with them. Observe, back quietly away and don't panic, and most of the time you'll be OK.

R Strahan's *The Mammals of Australia* is a comprehensive survey of Australia's somewhat cryptic mammals. Every species is illustrated, with descriptions penned by the nation's experts.

### BIRDS IN BED

Relatively few of Australia's birds are seasonal breeders, and few migrate. Instead, they breed when the rain comes and a large percentage are nomads, following the rain across the breadth of the continent.

So challenging are conditions in Australia that its birds have developed some extraordinary habits. Kookaburras, magpies and blue wrens – to name just a few – have developed a breeding system called 'helpers at the nest'. The helpers are the young adult birds of previous breedings, which stay with their parents to help bring up the new chicks. Just why they should do this was a mystery, until it was realised that conditions in Australia can be so harsh that more than two adult birds are needed to feed the nestlings. This pattern of breeding is very rare in places such as Asia, Europe and North America, but it is common among many Australian birds.



If you're interested in Australian reptiles (or exist in a state of mortal fear), H Cogger's *Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia* is a cold-blooded bible. This hefty volume will allow you to identify sundry species (or you can wield it as a defensive weapon if necessary!).

Some visitors mistake lizards for snakes, and indeed some Australian lizards look bizarre. One of the more abundant is the sleepy lizard. These creatures, which are found in the southern arid region, look like animated pine cones. They are the Australian equivalent of tortoises, and are harmless. Other lizards are much larger. Unless you visit the Indonesian island of Komodo you will not see a larger lizard than the desert-dwelling perentie. These creatures, with their leopardlike blotches, can grow to more than 2m long, and are efficient predators of introduced rabbits, feral cats and the like.

Feeling right at home in Kakadu National Park, the saltwater crocodile is the world's largest living reptile – old males can reach 6m long.

## Flora

Australia's plants can be irresistibly fascinating. If you happen to be in the Perth area in spring it's well worth taking a wild flower tour. The best flowers grow on the arid and monotonous sand plains, and the blaze of colour produced by the kangaroo paws, banksias and similar native plants can be dizzying. The sheer variety of flowers is amazing, with 4000 species crowded into the southwestern corner of the continent. This diversity of prolific flowering plants has long puzzled botanists. Again, Australia's poor soils seem to be the cause. The sand plain is about the poorest soil in Australia – it's almost pure quartz. This prevents any single fast-growing species from dominating. Instead, thousands of specialist plant species have learned to find a narrow niche and so coexist. Some live at the foot of the metre-high sand dunes, some on top, some on an east-facing slope, some on the west and so on. Their flowers need to be striking in order to attract pollinators, for nutrients are so lacking in this sandy world that even insects such as bees are rare.

If you do get to walk the wild flower regions of the southwest, keep your eyes open for the sundews. Australia is the centre of diversity for these beautiful, carnivorous plants. They've given up on the soil supplying their nutritional needs and have turned instead to trapping insects with the sweet globs of moisture on their leaves, and digesting them to obtain nitrogen and phosphorus.

## Environmental Challenges

The European colonisation of Australia, commencing in 1788, heralded a period of catastrophic environmental upheaval. The result today is that Australians are struggling with some of the most severe environmental problems to be found anywhere in the world. It may seem strange that a population of just 23 million, living in a continent the size of the USA minus Alaska, could inflict such damage on its environment, but Aus-

### A WHALE OF A TIME

A driving economic force across much of southern Australia from the time of colonisation, whaling, was finally banned in Australia in 1979. The main species on the end of the harpoon were humpback, blue, southern right and sperm whales, which were culled in huge numbers in traditional breeding grounds such as Sydney Harbour, the Western Australia coast around Albany and Hobart's Derwent River estuary. The industry remained profitable until the mid-1800s, before drastically depleted whale numbers, the lure of inland gold rushes and the emergence of petrol as an alternative fuel started to have an impact.

Over recent years (and much to locals' delight), whales have made cautious returns to both Sydney Harbour and the Derwent River. Ironically, whale watching has emerged as a lucrative tourist activity in migratory hotspots such as Head of Bight in South Australia, Warrnambool in Victoria, Hervey Bay in Queensland and out on the ocean beyond Sydney Harbour.

## SHARKY

Shark-o-phobia ruining your trip to the beach? Despite media hype spurred by five deaths in 2014, Australia has averaged just one shark-attack fatality per year since 1791. There are about 370 shark species in the world's oceans – around 160 of these swim through Australian waters. Of these, only a few pose any threat to humans: the usual suspects are oceanic white tip, great white, tiger and bull sharks.

It follows that where there are more people, there are more shark attacks. New South Wales, and Sydney in particular, has a bad rep. Attacks here peaked between 1920 and 1940, but since shark-net installation began in 1937 there's only been one fatality (1963), and dorsal-fin sightings are rare enough to make the nightly news. Realistically, you're more likely to get hit by a bus – so get wet and enjoy yourself!

tralia's long isolation, its fragile soils and difficult climate have made it particularly vulnerable to human-induced change.

Environmental damage has been inflicted in several ways, the most important including the introduction of pest species, destruction of forests, overstocking range lands and interference with water flows.

Beginning with the escape of domestic cats into the Australian bush shortly after 1788, a plethora of vermin – from foxes to wild camels and cane toads – have run wild in Australia, causing extinctions in the native fauna. One out of every 10 native mammals living in Australia prior to European colonisation is now extinct, and many more are highly endangered. Extinctions have also affected native plants, birds and amphibians.

The destruction of forests has also had an effect on the environment. Most of Australia's rainforests have suffered clearing, while conservationists fight with loggers over the fate of the last unprotected stands of 'old growth'.

Many Australian range lands have been chronically overstocked for more than a century, the result being the extreme vulnerability of both soils and rural economies to Australia's drought and flood cycle, as well as the extinction of many native species. The development of agriculture has involved land clearance and the provision of irrigation; again the effect has been profound. Clearing of the diverse and spectacular plant communities of the Western Australia wheat belt began just a century ago, yet today up to one-third of that country is degraded by salination of the soils.

Just 1.5% of Australia's land surface provides over 95% of its agricultural yield, and much of this land lies in the irrigated regions of the Murray-Darling Basin. This is Australia's agricultural heartland, yet it too is under severe threat from salting of soils and rivers. Irrigation water penetrates into the sediments laid down in an ancient sea, carrying salt into the catchments and fields. The Snowy River in New South Wales and Victoria also faces a battle for survival.

Despite the enormity of the biological crisis engulfing Australia, governments and the community have been slow to respond. It was in the 1980s that coordinated action began to take place, but not until the '90s that major steps were taken. The establishment of **Landcare** ([www.landcareaustralia.com.au](http://www.landcareaustralia.com.au)), an organisation enabling people to effectively address local environmental issues, and the expenditure of over \$2 billion through the federal government initiative 'Caring for our Country' have been important national initiatives. Yet so difficult are some of the issues the nation faces that, as yet, little has been achieved in terms of halting the destructive processes.

So severe are Australia's environmental problems that it will take a revolution before they can be overcome, for sustainable practices need to be implemented in every arena of life – from farms to suburbs and city

### Official Floral Emblems

*Common Heath*  
(Victoria)

*Cooktown Orchid*  
(Queensland)

*Red and Green  
Kangaroo  
Paw* (WA)

*Royal Bluebell*  
(ACT)

*Tasmanian Blue  
Gum* (Tasmania)

*Sturt's Desert  
Pea* (SA)

*Sturt's Desert  
Rose* (NT)

*Waratah* (NSW)

Australia has seen some devastating bushfires in recent times: the 'Black Saturday' fires in Victoria in 2009 claimed 173 lives, while in 2013 fires in Tasmania killed a firefighter and destroyed hundreds of buildings. The 2015 Adelaide Hills fires burned 125 sq km and dozens of houses and outbuildings.

### World Heritage Wonders

Great Barrier Reef, Queensland

Southwest Wilderness, Tasmania

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, NT

Kakadu National Park, NT

centres. Renewable energy, sustainable agriculture and water use lie at the heart of these changes, and Australians are only now developing the road map to sustainability that they so desperately need if they are to have a long-term future on the continent.

## Current Environmental Issues

Headlining the environmental issues facing Australia's fragile landscape at present are climate change, water scarcity, nuclear energy and uranium mining. All are interconnected. For Australia, the warmer temperatures resulting from climate change spell disaster to an already fragile landscape. A 2°C climb in average temperatures on the globe's driest continent will result in an even drier southern half of the country and greater water scarcity. Scientists also agree that hotter and drier conditions will exacerbate bushfire conditions and increase cyclone intensity.

Australia is a heavy greenhouse-gas emitter because it relies on coal and other fossil fuels for its energy supplies. The most prominent and also contentious alternative energy source is nuclear power, which creates less greenhouse gases and relies on uranium, in which Australia is rich. But the radioactive waste created by nuclear power stations can take thousands of years to become harmless. Moreover, uranium is a finite energy source (as opposed to yet-cleaner and renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power), and even if Australia were to establish sufficient nuclear power stations now to make a real reduction in coal-dependency, it would be years before the environmental and economic benefits were realised.

Uranium mining also produces polarised opinions. Because countries around the world are also looking to nuclear energy, Australia finds itself in a position to increase exports of one of its top-dollar resources. But uranium mining in Australia has been met with fierce opposition, not only because the product is a core ingredient of nuclear weapons, but also because much of Australia's uranium supplies sit beneath sacred Indigenous land. Supporters of increased uranium mining and export suggest that the best way to police the use of uranium is to manage its entire life cycle; that is to sell the raw product to international buyers, and then charge a fee to accept the waste and dispose of it. Both major political parties consider an expansion of Australia's uranium export industry to be inevitable for economic reasons.

## National & State Parks

Australia has more than 500 national parks – nonurban protected wilderness areas of environmental or natural importance. Each state defines and runs its own national parks, but the principle is the same throughout Australia. National parks include rainforests, vast tracts of empty outback, strips of coastal dune land and rugged mountain ranges.

Public access is encouraged as long as safety and conservation regulations are observed. In all parks you're asked to do nothing to damage or alter the natural environment. Camping grounds (often with toilets and showers), walking tracks and information centres are often provided for visitors. In most national parks there are restrictions on bringing in pets.

State parks and state forests are owned by state governments and have fewer regulations. Although state forests can be logged, they are often recreational areas with camping grounds, walking trails and signposted forest drives. Some permit horses and dogs.

## Watching Wildlife

Some regions of Australia offer unique opportunities to see wildlife, and one of the most fruitful is Tasmania. The island is jam-packed with wallabies, wombats and possums, principally because foxes, which have

## MALaise OF THE MURRAY-DARLING

The Murray-Darling Basin is Australia's largest river system, flowing through Queensland, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria then South Australia, covering an area of 1.05 million sq km – roughly 14% of Australia. Aside from quenching around a third of the country's agricultural and urban thirsts, it also irrigates precious rainforests, wetlands, subtropical areas and scorched arid lands.

But drought, irrigation and climate change have depleted Murray-Darling flows. Wetland areas around the Darling River that used to flood every five years are now likely to do so every 25 years, and prolific species are threatened with extinction. That the entire system will become too salty and unusable is a very real danger.

Rains and widespread flooding across eastern Australia since 2010 (especially 2011) have increased flows, but finding the delicate balance between agricultural and environmental water allocations continues to cause political and social turmoil across five states and territories.

decimated marsupial populations on the mainland, were slow to reach the island state (the first fox was found in Tasmania only as recently as 2001!). It is also home to the Tasmanian devil. These marsupials are common on the island, and in some national parks you can watch them tear apart road-killed wombats. Their squabbling is fearsome, their shrieks ear-splitting. It's the nearest thing Australia can offer to experiencing a lion kill on the Masai Mara. Unfortunately, Tassie devil populations are being decimated by the devil facial tumour disease.

For those intrigued by the diversity of tropical rainforests, Queensland's World Heritage Sites are well worth visiting. Birds of paradise, cassowaries and a variety of other birds can be seen by day, while at night you can search for tree kangaroos (yes, some kinds of kangaroo do live in the treetops). In your nocturnal wanderings you are highly likely to see curious possums, some of which look like skunks, and other marsupials that are restricted to a small area of northeast Queensland.

Australia's deserts are a real hit-and-miss affair as far as wildlife is concerned. If you're visiting in a drought year, all you might see are dusty plains, the odd mob of kangaroos and emus, and a few struggling trees. Return after big rains, however, and you'll encounter something close to a Garden of Eden. Fields of white and gold daisies stretch endlessly into the distance. The salt lakes fill with fresh water, and millions of water birds can be seen feeding on the superabundant fish and insect life of the waters. It all seems like a mirage, and like a mirage it will vanish as the land dries out, only to spring to life again in a few years or a decade's time. For a more reliable birdwatching spectacular, Kakadu is worth a look, especially towards the end of the dry season around November.

The largest creatures found in the Australian region are marine mammals such as whales and seals, and there is no better place to see them than South Australia. During springtime southern right whales crowd into the head of the Great Australian Bight. You can readily observe them near the remote Aboriginal community of Yalata as they mate, frolic and suckle their young. Kangaroo Island, south of Adelaide, is a fantastic place to see seals and sea lions. There are well-developed visitor centres to facilitate the viewing of wildlife, and nightly penguin parades occur at some places where the adult blue penguins make their nest burrows. Kangaroo Island's beaches are magical places, where you're able to stroll among fabulous shells, whale bones and even jewel-like leafy sea dragons amid the sea wrack.

The fantastic diversity of Queensland's Great Barrier Reef is legendary, and a boat trip out to the reef from Cairns or Port Douglas is unforgettable. Just as extraordinary but less well known is the diversity of Australia's southern waters; the Great Australian Bight is home to more kinds of marine creatures than anywhere else on earth.

The Coastal Studies Unit at the University of Sydney has deemed there to be an astonishing 10,685 beaches in Australia (their definition of a beach being a stretch of sand more than 20m long which remains dry at high tide).

# Food & Drink

In a decade not so long ago, Australians proudly survived on a diet of 'meat and three veg'. Fine fare was a Sunday roast, and lasagne was considered exotic. Fortunately the country's cuisine has evolved, and these days Australian gastronomy is keen to break rules, backed up by world-beating wines, kick-ass coffee and a booming craft beer scene.

## Fab Food Festivals

*Taste of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania.*

*Melbourne Food & Wine Festival, Melbourne, Victoria.*

*Clare Valley Gourmet Weekend, Clare Valley, South Australia.*

*Margaret River Gourmet Escape, Western Australia.*

## Modern Australian (Mod Oz)

The phrase Modern Australian (Mod Oz) has been coined to classify contemporary Australian cuisine: a melange of East and West; a swirl of Atlantic and Pacific Rim; a flourish of authentic French and Italian.

Immigration has been the key to this culinary concoction. An influx of immigrants since WWII, from Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa, introduced new ingredients and new ways to use staples. Vietnamese, Japanese, Fijian – no matter where it's from, there are expat communities and interested locals keen to cook and eat it. You'll find Jamaicans using Scotch bonnet peppers and Tunisians making tajine.

As the Australian appetite for diversity and invention grows, so does the food culture surrounding it. Cookbooks and foodie magazines are bestsellers and Australian celebrity chefs – highly sought overseas – reflect Australia's multiculturalism in their backgrounds and dishes. Cooking TV shows – both competitions and foodie travel documentaries – have become mandatory nightly viewing.

If all this sounds overwhelming, never fear. The range of food in Australia is a true asset. You'll find that dishes are characterised by bold and interesting flavours and fresh ingredients. All palates are catered for: the chilli-metre spans gentle to extreme, seafood is plentiful, meats are full-flavoured, and vegetarian needs are considered (especially in the cities).

## Fresh Local Food

Australia is huge (similar in size to continental USA), and it varies so much in climate, from the tropical north to the temperate south, that at any time of the year there's an enormous array of produce on offer. Fruit is a fine example. In summer, kitchen bowls overflow with nectarines, peaches and cherries, and mangoes are so plentiful that Queenslanders get sick of them. The Murray River gives rise to orchards of citrus fruits, grapes and melons. Tasmania's cold climate means its strawberries and stone fruits are sublime. The tomatoes and olives of South Australia (SA) are the nation's best. Local supermarkets stock the pick of the bunch.

Seafood is always freshest close to the source; on this big island it's plentiful. Oysters are popular: connoisseurs prize Sydney rock oysters, a species that actually lives right along the New South Wales (NSW) coast; excellent oysters are grown in seven different regions in SA; and Tasmania is known for its Pacific oysters. Australia's southernmost state is also celebrated for its trout, salmon and abalone.

An odd-sounding delicacy from these waters is bugs – shovel-nosed lobsters without a lobster's price tag (try the Balmain and Moreton Bay varieties). Marron are prehistoric-looking freshwater crayfish from Western Australia (WA), with a subtle taste that's not always enhanced by the

Australians consume more than 206,000 tonnes of seafood per year. Along the coast, fish-and-chip shops often get their seafood straight from the local fishing boats: ask the cook what's frozen (ie from elsewhere) and what's not.

## BUSH TUCKER: AUSTRALIAN NATIVE FOODS

There are around 350 food plants that are native to the Australian bush. Bush foods provide a real taste of the Australian landscape. There are the dried fruits and lean meats of the desert; shellfish and fish of the coast; alpine berries and mountain peppers of the high country; and citrus flavours, fruits and herbs of the rainforests.

This cuisine is based on Indigenous Australians' expert understanding of the environment, founded in cultural knowledge handed down over generations. Years of trial and error have ensured a rich appreciation of these foods and mastery of their preparation.

The harvesting of bush foods for commercial return has been occurring for about 30 years. In central Australia it is mainly carried out by middle-aged and senior Aboriginal women. Here and in other regions, bush meats such as kangaroo, emu and crocodile, fish such as barramundi, and bush fruits including desert raisins, quandongs, ribberries, and Kakadu plums are seasonally hunted and gathered for personal enjoyment, as well as to supply local, national and international markets.

*Janelle White is an applied anthropologist, currently completing a PhD on Aboriginal people's involvement in a variety of desert-based bush produce industries – including bush foods, bush medicines and bush jewellery. She splits her time between Adelaide, and the land 200km northwest of Alice Springs.*

heavy dressings that seem popular. Prawns in Australia are incredible, particularly sweet school prawns or the eastern king (Yamba) prawns found along the northern NSW coast. You can sample countless wild fish species, including prized barramundi from the Northern Territory (NT), but even fish that are considered run-of-the-mill (such as snapper, trevally and whiting) taste fabulous simply barbecued.

There's a growing boutique cheese movement across the country's dairy regions; Tasmania alone now produces 50 cheese varieties.

## Restaurant Dining

A restaurant meal in Australia is a relaxed affair. You'll probably order within 15 minutes and see the first course (entrée) 20 minutes later. The main course will arrive about half an hour after that. Even at the finest restaurants a jacket is not required (but certainly isn't frowned upon).

If a restaurant is BYO, you can bring your own alcohol. If it also sells alcohol, you can usually only bring your own bottled wine (no beer, no cask wine) and a corkage charge is added to your bill. The cost is either per person or per bottle, and can be up to \$20 per bottle in fine-dining places (do the sums: you'll often be better off buying from the restaurant).

Tipping is not mandatory in Australia, but is appreciated if the food is great and service comes with a smile. Around 10% is the norm.

## Quick Eats

In the big cities, street vending is on the rise – coffee carts have been joined by vans selling tacos, burritos, baked potatoes, burgers... Elsewhere around the cities you'll find fast-food chains, gourmet sandwich bars, food courts in shopping centres and market halls, bakeries, and sushi, noodle and salad bars. Beyond the big smoke the options are more limited and traditional, such as milk bars (known as delis in SA and WA). These corner stores often serve old-fashioned hamburgers (with bacon, egg, pineapple and beetroot!) and other takeaway foods.

There are almost a million Aussies with Italian heritage: it follows that pizza is (arguably) the most popular Australian fast food. Most home-delivered pizzas are of the American style (thick and with lots of toppings) rather than Italian style. However, wood-fired, thin, Neapolitan-style pizza can still be found, even in country towns.

Fish and chips are still hugely popular; the fish most often a form of shark (often called flake; don't worry, it's delicious), either grilled or dipped in batter and fried.

Etiquette hint: if you're invited to someone's house for dinner, always take a gift (even if the host dissuades you): a bottle of wine, a six-pack of beer, some flowers or a box of chocolates.

If you're at a rugby league or Aussie rules football match, a beer and a meat pie are as compulsory as wearing your team's colours and yelling loudly from the stands.

## Eating with the Locals

Most Aussies eat cereal, toast and/or fruit for breakfast, often extending to bacon and eggs on weekends, washed down with tea and coffee. They devour sandwiches, salads and sushi for lunch, and then eat anything and everything in the evening.

The iconic Australian barbecue (BBQ or barbie) is a near-mandatory cultural experience. In summer locals invite their mates around at dinnertime and fire-up the barbie, grilling burgers, sausages (snags), steaks, seafood, and vegie, meat or seafood skewers. If you're invited to a BBQ, bring some meat and cold beer. Year-round the BBQ is wheeled out at weekends for quick-fire lunches. There are plenty of free electric or gas BBQs in parks around the country – a terrific traveller-friendly option.

## Cafes & Coffee

Cafes in Australia generally serve good-value food: you can get a decent meal for around \$15. Kids are usually more than welcome.

Coffee has become an Australian addiction. There are Italian-style espresso machines in virtually every cafe, boutique roasters are all the rage and, in urban areas, the qualified barista is ever-present (there are even barista-manned cafes attached to petrol stations). Sydney and Melbourne have given rise to a whole generation of coffee snobs, the two cities duking it out for bragging rights as Australia's coffee capital. The cafe scene in Melbourne's city laneways is particularly artsy. You'll also find decent places in the other big cities and towns, and there's now a sporting chance of good coffee in many rural areas.

## Pubs & Drinking

You're in the right country if you're in need of a drink. Long recognised as some of the finest in the world, Australian wines are one of the nation's top exports. As the public develops a more sophisticated palate, local craft beers are rising to the occasion. There's a growing wealth of microbrewed flavours and varieties on offer, challenging the nation's entrenched predilection for mass-produced lager. If you're into whisky, head to Tasmania: there are a dozen distillers there now, bottling-up superb single malts and racking up international awards.

Most Australian beers have an alcohol content between 3.5% and 5.5%, less than European beers but more than most in North America.

### FOOD: WHEN, WHERE & HOW

- Budget eating venues usually offer main courses for under \$15, midrange places are generally between \$15 and \$32, with top-end venues charging over \$32.
- Cafes serve breakfasts from around 8am on weekends – a bit earlier on weekdays – and close around 5pm.
- Pubs and bars usually open around lunchtime and continue till at least 10pm – later from Thursday to Saturday. Pubs usually serve food from noon to 2pm and 6pm to 8pm.
- Restaurants generally open around noon for lunch, 6pm for dinner. Australians usually eat lunch shortly after noon; dinner bookings are usually made between 7pm and 8pm, though in big cities some restaurants stay open past 10pm.
- Vegetarian eateries and vegetarian selections in nonveg places (including menu choices for vegans and for coeliac sufferers) are common in large cities. Rural Australia continues its dedication to meat.
- Smoking is banned in cafes, restaurants, clubs, pubs and in many city malls.

## WINE REGIONS

All Australian states and mainland territories (except the tropical/desert Northern Territory) sustain wine industries, some almost 200 years old. Many wineries have tastings for free or a small fee, often redeemable if you buy a bottle. Although plenty of good wine comes from big wineries with economies of scale on their side, the most interesting wines are often made by small producers. The following rundown should give you a head start.

### South Australia

South Australia's wine industry is a global giant, as a visit to the National Wine Centre in Adelaide will attest. Cabernet sauvignon from Coonawarra, riesling from the Clare Valley, sauvignon blanc from the Adelaide Hills and shiraz from the Barossa Valley and McLaren Vale are bliss in a bottle.

### New South Wales & the Australian Capital Territory

Dating from the 1820s, the Hunter Valley is Australia's oldest wine region. The Lower Hunter is known for shiraz and unwooded semillon. Upper Hunter wineries specialise in cabernet sauvignon and shiraz, with forays into verdelho and chardonnay. Further inland are award-winning wineries at Griffith, Mudgee and Orange. In the ACT, Canberra's surrounds also have a growing number of excellent wineries.

### Western Australia

Margaret River is synonymous with superb cabernets and chardonnays. Among old-growth forest, Pemberton wineries produce cabernet sauvignon, merlot, pinot noir, sauvignon blanc and shiraz. The south coast's Mt Barker is another budding wine region.

### Victoria

Victoria has more than 500 wineries. A day-trip from Melbourne, the Yarra Valley produces excellent chardonnay and pinot noir, as does the Mornington Peninsula. Wineries around Rutherglen produce champion fortified wines as well as shiraz and durif.

### Tasmania

Try the Pipers River Region and the Tamar Valley in the north, and explore the burgeoning wine industry in the Coal River Valley around Richmond near Hobart. Cool-climate drops are the name of the game here: especially pinot noir, sauvignon blanc and sparkling whites (our favourite is made by Jansz – 'Méthode Tasmanoise', ha-ha...).

### Queensland

High-altitude Stanthorpe and Ballandean in the southeast are the centres of the Queensland wine industry, though you'll find a few cellar doors at Tamborine Mountain in the Gold Coast hinterland.

Light beers contain under 3% alcohol and are a good choice if you have to drive (as long as you don't drink twice as much).

The terminology used to order beer varies state by state. In NSW you ask for a schooner (425mL) if you're thirsty and a middy (285mL) if you're not quite so dry. In Victoria the 285mL measure is called a pot; in Tasmania it's called a 10oz. Pints can either be 425mL or 568mL, depending on where you are. Mostly you can just ask for a beer and see what turns up.

'Shouting' is a revered custom where people take turns to pay for a round of drinks. At a toast, everyone should touch glasses and look each other in the eye as they clink – failure to do so is purported to result in seven years' bad sex (...which is better than seven years of no sex, but why not make eye-contact and hope for the best).

Pub meals (counter meals) are usually hefty and good value; standards such as sausages and mash or schnitzel and salad go for \$15 to \$25.

A competitively priced place to eat is at a club – Returned and Services League (RSL) or Surf Life Saving clubs are solid bets. You order at the kitchen take a number and wait until it's called out over the counter or intercom. You pick up the meal yourself, saving the restaurant on staffing costs and you on your total bill.

**Vegetite:** you'll either love it or hate it. For reference, Barack Obama diplomatically called it 'horrible'. It's certainly an acquired taste, but Australians consume more than 22 million jars of the stuff every year.



# Sport

Whether they're filling stadiums, glued to the big screen at the pub or on the couch in front of the TV, Australians invest heavily in sport – both fiscally and emotionally. The federal government kicks in more than \$300 million every year – enough cash for the nation to hold its own against formidable international sporting opponents. Despite slipping to 10th spot on the 2012 London Olympics medal tally, Australia is looking forward to redemption at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

'Footy' in Australia can mean a number of things. In NSW and Queensland it's rugby league; everywhere else it's Australian Rules football. Just to confuse you, 'football' can also mean soccer!

## Australian Rules Football

Australia's most attended sport, and one of the two most watched, is Australian Rules football (Aussie rules). While traditionally embedded in Victorian state culture and identity, the Australian Football League (AFL; [www.afl.com.au](http://www.afl.com.au)) has gradually expanded its popularity into all states, including rugby-dominated New South Wales and Queensland. Long kicks, high marks and brutal collisions whip crowds into frenzies: the roar of 50,000-plus fans yelling 'Baaall!!!' upsets dogs in suburban backyards for miles around.

## Rugby

The National Rugby League (NRL; [www.nrl.com.au](http://www.nrl.com.au)) is the most popular football code north of the Murray River, the season highlight being the annual State of Origin series between NSW and Queensland. To witness an NRL game is to appreciate all of Newton's laws of motion – bone-crunching!

The national rugby union team, the Wallabies, won the Rugby World Cup in 1991 and 1999 and was runner-up in 2003, but hasn't made the final since (let us know what happens in 2015!). Australia, New Zealand and South Africa compete in the superpopular Super 15s ([www.superxv.com](http://www.superxv.com)) competition, which includes five Australian teams: the Waratahs (Sydney), the Reds (Brisbane), the Brumbies (Australian Capital Territory, aka ACT), the Force (Perth) and the Rebels (Melbourne). The Waratahs beat New Zealand's Canterbury Crusaders by a point on the 2014 final – go 'tahs! The competition will expand to 18 teams from 2016, including teams from Argentina and Japan.

## Soccer

Australia's national soccer team, the Socceroos, qualified for the 2006, 2010 and 2014 FIFA World Cups after a long history of almost-but-not-quite getting there. Results were mixed, but pride in the national team is sky-high (and actually reached the stratosphere when the Socceroos won the Asian Cup in 2015).

The national A-League ([www.a-league.com.au](http://www.a-league.com.au)) comp has enjoyed increased popularity in recent years, successfully luring a few big-name international players to bolster the home-grown talent pool.

## Cricket

The Aussies dominated both test and one-day cricket for much of the noughties, holding the No 1 world ranking for most of the decade. But the subsequent retirement of once-in-a-lifetime players such as Shane Warne, Adam Gilchrist and Ricky Ponting sent the team into an extended rebuilding phase. Only now is the team returning to a level of success to which the viewing public has become accustomed.

The pinnacle of Australian cricket is the biennial test series played between Australia and England, known as 'The Ashes'. The unofficial Ashes trophy is a tiny terracotta urn containing the ashen remnants of an 1882 cricket ball (the perfect Australian BBQ conversation opener: ask a local what a 'bail' is). Series losses in 2009, 2011 and 2013 to the arch-enemy caused nationwide misery. Redemption came in 2014, when Australia won back the Ashes 5-0, only the third clean-sweep in Ashes history. (The 2014 series was due to be played in 2015, but was bumped forward a year to avoid a clash with the 2015 one-day World Cup.)

Despite the Australian cricket team's bad rep for sledging (verbally dressing down one's opponent on the field), cricket is still a gentleman's game. Take the time to watch a match if you never have – such tactical cut-and-thrust, such nuance, such grace.

Australia's T20 Big Bash League ([www.bigbash.com.au](http://www.bigbash.com.au)), the 20-over form of cricket, is gaining ground on the traditional five-day and one-day formats. Fast, flashy and laced with pyrotechnics, it's thin on erudition but makes for a fun night out.

## Tennis

Every January in Melbourne, the Australian Open (p492) attracts more people to Australia than any other sporting event. The men's competition was last won by an Australian, Mark Edmondson, back in 1976 – and while Lleyton Hewitt has been Australia's great hope for many years, the former world No 1's best playing days are behind him (but he looks set for a career as a commentator). Young gun Nick Kyrgios looks set to take up the mantle (or at least impress with his haircuts). In the women's game, Australian Sam Stosur won the US Open in 2011 and has been hovering around the top-10 player rankings ever since.

## Swimming

Australia: girt by sea and pock-marked with pools; its population can swim. Australia's greatest female swimmer, Dawn Fraser, known simply as 'our Dawn', won the 100m freestyle gold at three successive Olympics (1956–64), plus the 4 x 100m freestyle relay in 1956. Australia's greatest male swimmer, Ian Thorpe (known as Thorpie or the Thorpedo), retired in 2006 aged 24 with five Olympic golds swinging from his neck. In early 2011, Thorpe announced his comeback, his eye fixed on the 2012 London Olympics – but he failed to make the team in the selection trials, and left

### SURF'S UP!

Australia has been synonymous with surfing ever since the Beach Boys effused about 'Australia's Narrabeen', one of Sydney's northern beaches, in 'Surfin' USA'. Other surfing hotspots such as Bells Beach, Margaret River, the Pass at Byron Bay, the heavy-breaking Shipstern Bluff in Tasmania and Burleigh Heads on the Gold Coast also resonate with international wave addicts. Iron Man and Surf Lifesaving competitions are also held on beaches around the country, attracting dedicated fans to the sand.

More than a few Australian surfers have attained 'World Champion' status. In the men's comp, legendary surfers include Mark Richards, Tom Carroll, Joel Parkinson and 2013 champ Mick Fanning. In the women's competition, iconic Aussie surfers include Wendy Botha, seven-time champion Layne Beachley and 2014 champ (and six-time winner) Stephanie Gilmore.

the pool again to finish his autobiography. Speedy upstart James Magnussen hasn't won Olympic gold, but at the time of writing was the 100m freestyle world champ.

## Horse Racing

Australians love to bet on the 'nags' – in fact, betting on horse racing is so mainstream and accessible that it's almost the national hobby! There are racecourses all around the country and local holidays for racing carnivals in Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia.

Australia's biggest race – the 'race that stops a nation' – is the Melbourne Cup (p493), which occurs on the first Tuesday in November. The most famous Melbourne Cup winner was the New Zealand-born Phar Lap, who won in 1930 before dying of a mystery illness (suspected arsenic poisoning) in the USA. Phar Lap is now a prize exhibit in the Melbourne Museum. The British-bred (but Australian-trained) Makybe Diva is a more recent star, winning three cups in a row before retiring in 2005.

Lonely Planet

# Survival Guide

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# Deadly & Dangerous

If you're the pessimistic type, you might choose to focus on the things that can bite, sting, burn, freeze, drown or rob you in Australia. But chances are the worst you'll encounter are a few pesky flies and mosquitoes. Splash on some insect repellent and boldly venture forth!

See also p1077.

## Where the Wild Things Are

Australia's profusion of dangerous creatures is legendary: snakes, spiders, sharks, crocodiles, jellyfish... Travellers needn't be alarmed, though – you're unlikely to see many of these creatures in the wild, much less be attacked by one.

### Crocodiles

Around the northern Australian coastline, saltwater crocodiles (salties) are a real danger. They also inhabit estuaries, creeks and rivers,

sometimes a long way inland. Observe safety signs or ask locals whether that inviting-looking waterhole or river is croc free before plunging in.

### Jellyfish

With venomous tentacles up to 3m long, box jellyfish (aka sea wasps or stingers) inhabit Australia's tropical waters. They're most common during the wet season (October to March) when you should stay out of the sea in many places. Stinger nets are in place at some beaches, but never swim unless you've checked. 'Stinger suits' (full-body Lycra swimsuits) prevent stinging, as do wetsuits. If you are stung, wash the skin with vinegar then get to a hospital.

The box jellyfish also has a tiny, lethal relative called an irukandji, though to date, only two north-coast deaths have been directly attributed to it.

### Sharks

Despite extensive media coverage, the risk of shark attack in Australia is no greater than in other countries with extensive coastlines. Check with surf life-saving groups about local risks.

### Snakes

Australia has plenty of venomous snakes. Most common are brown and tiger snakes, but few species are aggressive. Unless you're poking a stick at or accidentally standing on one, it's extremely unlikely that you'll get bitten. If you are bitten, prevent the spread of venom by applying pressure to the wound and immobilising the area with a splint or sling. Stay put and get someone else to go for help.

### Spiders

Australia has several poisonous spiders, bites from which are usually treatable with antivenenes. The deadly funnel-web spider lives in New South Wales (NSW; including Sydney); bites are treated as per snake bites (pressure and immobilisation before transferring to a hospital). Redback spiders live throughout Australia; bites cause pain, sweating and nausea. Apply ice or cold packs, then transfer to hospital. White-tailed-spider bites may cause an ulcer that's slow and difficult to heal. Clean the wound and

## MAINTAINING PERSPECTIVE

There's approximately one fatal crocodile attack per year in Australia, and, despite five deaths in 2014, one fatal shark attack. Blue-ringed-octopus deaths are rarer – only two in the last century. Jellyfish do better – about two deaths annually – but you're still more than 100 times more likely to drown. Spiders haven't killed anyone in the last 20 years. Snake bites kill one or two people per year, as do bee stings, but you're about a thousand times more likely to perish on the nation's roads.

seek medical assistance. The disturbingly large huntsman spider is harmless, though seeing one can affect your blood pressure and/or underpants.

## Out & About

### At the Beach

Check surf conditions and be aware of your own expertise and limitations before entering the waves. Patrolled, safe-swimming areas are indicated by red-and-yellow flags – swim between them. Undertows (rips) are a problem: if you find yourself being carried out to sea, swim parallel to the shore until you're out of the rip, then head for the beach.

Several people are paralysed every year by diving into shallow waves and hitting sand bars: look before you leap.

Always use SPF30+ sunscreen; apply it 30 minutes before going into the sun and repeat applications regularly.

### Bushfires

Bushfires happen yearly across Australia. In hot, dry and windy weather, and on total-fire-ban days, be extremely careful with naked flames (including cigarette butts) and don't use camping stoves, campfires or BBQs. Bushwalkers should delay trips until things cool down. If you're out in the bush and you see smoke, take it seriously: find the nearest open space (downhill if possible). Forested ridges are dangerous places to be.

### Cold Weather

More bushwalkers in Australia die of cold than in bushfires. Even in summer, particularly in highland Tasmania, Victoria and NSW, conditions can change quickly, with temperatures dropping below freezing and blizzards blowing in. Hypo-

thermia is a real risk. Early signs include the inability to perform fine movements (eg doing up buttons), shivering and a bad case of the 'umbles' (fumbles, mumbles, grumbles, stumbles). Get out of the cold, change out of wet clothing and into dry stuff, and eat and drink to warm up.

### Heat Exhaustion

Symptoms of heat exhaustion include dizziness, fainting, fatigue, nausea or vomiting. Skin becomes pale, cool and clammy. Treatment consists of rest in a cool, shady place and fluid replacement with water or diluted sports drinks.

Heatstroke is a severe form of heat illness and is a true medical emergency, with heating of the brain leading to disorientation, hallucinations and seizures. Prevent heatstroke by maintaining adequate fluid intake, especially during physical exertion.

### Crime

Australia is a relatively safe place to visit, but you should still take reasonable precautions. Avoid walking around alone at night, don't leave hotel rooms or cars unlocked, and don't leave valuables visible through car windows.

Some pubs in Sydney and other big cities post warnings about drugged or 'spiked' drinks: play it safe if someone offers you a drink in a bar.

## Diseases & Discomforts

You'll be unlucky to pick any of these up in your travels, but the following diseases do crop up around Australia.

For protection against insect-borne illnesses (dengue fever, Ross River fever, tick typhus, viral encephalitis), wear loose-fitting, long-

sleeved clothing, and apply 30% DEET to exposed skin.

### Dengue Fever

Dengue fever occurs in northern Queensland, particularly during the wet season. Causing severe muscular aches, it's a viral disease spread by a day-feeding species of mosquito. Most people recover in a few days, but more severe forms of the disease can occur.

### Giardiasis

Giardia is widespread in Australian waterways. Drinking untreated water from streams and lakes is not recommended. Use water filters, and boil or treat this water with iodine to help prevent giardiasis. Symptoms consist of intermittent diarrhoea, abdominal bloating and wind. Effective treatment is available (tinidazole or metronidazole).

### Ross River Fever

The Ross River virus is widespread in Australia, transmitted by marsh-dwelling mosquitoes. In addition to fever, it causes headache, joint and muscular pain, and a rash that resolves after five to seven days.

### Tick Typhus

Predominantly occurring in Queensland and NSW, tick typhus involves a dark area forming around a tick bite, followed by a rash, fever, headache and lymph-node inflammation. The disease is treatable with antibiotics (doxycycline).

### Viral Encephalitis

This mosquito-borne disease is most common in northern Australia (especially during the wet season), but poses minimal risk to travellers. Symptoms include headache, muscle pain and sensitivity to light. Residual neurological damage can occur and no specific treatment is available.

# Directory A–Z

## Accommodation

Australia offers everything from the tent-pegged confines of camp sites and the communal space of hostels, to gourmet breakfasts in guesthouses, chaperoned farmstays and indulgent resorts, plus the full gamut of hotel and motel lodgings.

During the summer high season (December to February) and at other peak times, particularly school holidays and Easter, prices are usually at their highest. Outside these times you'll find useful discounts and lower walk-in rates. Notable exceptions include central Australia, the Top End and Australia's ski resorts, where summer is the low season and prices drop substantially.

## B&Bs

Australian bed-and-breakfast options include restored miners' cottages, converted barns, rambling old houses, upmarket country manors and beachside bungalows. Tariffs are typically in the midrange bracket, but can be higher. In areas that attract weekenders – historic towns,

wine regions, accessible forest regions such as the Blue Mountains in New South Wales (NSW) and the Dandenongs in Victoria – B&Bs are often upmarket, charging small fortunes for weekend stays in high season.

Some places advertised as B&Bs are actually self-contained cottages with breakfast provisions supplied. Only in the cheaper B&Bs will bathroom facilities be shared. Some B&B hosts may also cook dinner for guests (usually 24 hours' notice is required).

Online resources:

**Beautiful Accommodation** ([www.beautifulaccommodation.com](http://www.beautifulaccommodation.com)). A select crop of luxury B&Bs and self-contained houses.

**Hosted Accommodation Australia** ([www.australianbedandbreakfast.com.au](http://www.australianbedandbreakfast.com.au)). Listings for B&Bs, farmstays, cottages and homesteads.

**OZ Bed and Breakfast** ([www.ozbedandbreakfast.com](http://www.ozbedandbreakfast.com)). Nationwide website.

## Camping & Caravanning

The nightly camping cost for two people is usually

between \$20 and \$30, slightly more for a powered site. Camping in the bush is a highlight of travelling in Australia: in the outback and northern Australia you often won't even need a tent, and nights spent around a campfire under the stars are unforgettable.

**Seasons** To avoid extremes of hot and cold weather, camping is best done during winter (the dry season) across the north of Australia, and during summer in the south.

**Costs** Unless otherwise stated, prices for camp sites are for two people. Staying at designated camp sites in national parks normally costs between \$7 and \$15 per person.

**Facilities** Almost all caravan and holiday parks are equipped with hot showers, flushing toilets and laundry facilities, and frequently a pool. Most have cabins, powered caravan sites and tent sites. Cabin sizes and facilities vary, but expect to pay \$70 to \$80 for a small cabin with a kitchenette and up to \$170 for a two- or three-bedroom cabin with a fully equipped kitchen, lounge room, TV and beds for up to six people.

**Locations** Note that most city camping grounds usually lie several kilometres from the town centre – only convenient if you have wheels. Caravan parks are popular in coastal areas: book well in advance during summer and Easter.

**Resources** Get your hands on *Camps Australia Wide* ([www.campsworld.com.au](http://www.campsworld.com.au)).

## BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews by Lonely Planet authors, check out <http://lonelyplanet.com/australia/hotels>. You'll find independent reviews, as well as recommendations on the best places to stay. Best of all, you can book online.

campstraliawide.com), a handy publication (and app) containing maps and information about camp sites across Australia.

**Permits** Applications for national-park camping permits are often handled online by state departments (eg in Queensland it's via the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport & Racing website, [www.nprsr.qld.gov.au](http://www.nprsr.qld.gov.au); in WA it's via the government Park Stay WA website, <http://parkstay.dpaw.wa.gov.au>). Regional sleeping listings in this book contain this booking info.

**Major Chains** If you're doing a lot of caravanning/camping, consider joining one of the chain organisations, which offer member discounts:

**Big 4 Holiday Parks** ([www.big4.com.au](http://www.big4.com.au))

**Discovery Holiday Parks** ([www.discoveryholidayparks.com.au](http://www.discoveryholidayparks.com.au))

**Top Tourist Parks** ([www.toptouristparks.com.au](http://www.toptouristparks.com.au))

## Holiday Apartments

**Costs** For a two-bedroom flat, you're looking at anywhere from \$140 to \$200 per night, but you will pay much more in high season and for serviced apartments in major cities.

**Facilities** Self-contained holiday apartments range from simple, studio-like rooms with small kitchenettes, to two-bedroom apartments with full laundries and state-of-the-art entertainment systems: great value for multnight stays. Sometimes they come in small, single-storey blocks, but in tourist hotspots such as the Gold Coast expect a sea of high-rises.

## Hostels

Backpacker hostels are exceedingly popular in Australian cities and along the coast, but in the outback and rural areas you'll be hard-pressed to find one. Highly social affairs, they're generally overflowing with 18- to 30-year-olds, but some have reinvented themselves to attract other travellers who simply want to sleep for cheap.

## SLEEPING PRICE RANGES

The following price ranges refer to a double room with bathroom in high season (summer):

**\$** less than \$100

**\$\$** \$100 to \$200

**\$\$\$** more than \$200

Expect to pay \$20 to \$50 more in expensive areas – notably Sydney, Perth and parts of northern Western Australia. Some upmarket Australian hostels charge upwards of \$100 for a double room, but in this book we still classify them as '\$' for their budget dorm beds.

**Costs** Typically a dorm bed costs \$25 to \$35 per night, and a double (usually without bathroom) \$70 to \$90.

**Facilities** Hostels provide varying levels of accommodation, from the austere simplicity of wilderness hostels to city-centre buildings with a cafe-bar and en suite rooms. Most of the accommodation is in dormitories (bunk rooms), usually ranging in size from four to 12 beds. Many hostels also provide twin rooms and doubles. Hostels generally have cooking facilities, a communal area with a TV, laundry facilities and sometimes travel offices and job centres.

**Bed linen** Often provided; sleeping bags are not welcome due to hygiene concerns.

## HOSTEL ORGANISATIONS & CHAINS

The **Youth Hostels Association** (YHA; [www.yha.com.au](http://www.yha.com.au)) has around 60 Australian hostels, offering dorms, twin and double rooms, and cooking and laundry facilities: the vibe is generally less 'party' than in independent hostels.

Nightly charges start at \$25 for members; hostels also take non-YHA members for an extra \$3. Australian residents can become YHA members for \$42 for one year (\$32 if you're aged between 18 and 25). Join online or at any YHA hostel. Families can also join: just pay the adult price, then kids under 18 can join for free.

The YHA is part of **Hostelling International** ([www.hihostels.com](http://www.hihostels.com)). If you already have HI membership in your own country, you're entitled to YHA rates in Australia. Preferably, visitors to Australia should purchase an HI card in their country of residence, but once you're in Australia you can also buy memberships online, at state offices or major YHA hostels.

Following are other international organisations with Australian hostels:

**Base Backpackers** ([www.stayatbase.com](http://www.stayatbase.com))

**Nomads** ([www.nomadsworld.com](http://www.nomadsworld.com))

**VIP Backpackers** ([www.vipbackpackers.com](http://www.vipbackpackers.com))

## Hotels

Hotels in Australian cities and well-touristed places are generally of the business or luxury chain variety (midrange to top end): comfortable, anonymous, mod-con-filled rooms in multistorey blocks. For these hotels we quote 'rack rates' (official advertised rates, usually upwards of \$160 a night), though significant discounts can be offered when business is quiet.

## Motels

Drive-up motels offer comfortable midrange accommodation and are found all over Australia, often on the edges of urban centres. They rarely offer a cheaper rate for



## PRACTICALITIES

- ➔ **DVDs** Australian DVDs are encoded for Region 4, which includes Mexico, South America, Central America, New Zealand, the Pacific and the Caribbean.
- ➔ **Newspapers** Leaf through the daily *Sydney Morning Herald*, Melbourne's *Age* or the national *Australian* broadsheet newspaper.
- ➔ **Radio** Tune in to ABC radio; check out [www.abc.net.au/radio](http://www.abc.net.au/radio).
- ➔ **Smoking** Banned on public transport, in pubs, bars and eateries, and in some public outdoor spaces.
- ➔ **TV** The main free-to-air TV channels are the government-sponsored ABC, multicultural SBS and the three commercial networks – Seven, Nine and Ten. Numerous free spin-off and local channels enrich the viewing brew.
- ➔ **Weights & Measures** Australia uses the metric system.

singles, so are better value for couples or groups of three. You'll mostly pay between \$120 and \$160 for a simple room with a kettle, fridge, TV, air-con and bathroom.

### Pubs

Many Australian pubs (from the term 'public house') were built during boom times, so they're often among the largest, most extravagant buildings in town. Some have been restored, but generally rooms remain small and weathered, with a long amble down the hall to the bathroom. They're usually central and cheap; singles/doubles with shared facilities from \$60/90, more if you want a private bathroom. If you're a light sleeper, avoid booking a room above the bar and check whether a band is cranking out the rock downstairs that night.

### Rental & Long-Term Accommodation

If you're in Australia for a while (visas permitting), then a rental property or room in a shared flat or house will be an economical option. Delve into the classified advertisement sections of the daily

newspapers; Wednesday and Saturday are usually the best days. Noticeboards in universities, hostels, bookshops and cafes are also useful. Properties listed through a real-estate agent usually necessitate at least a six-month lease, plus a bond and first month's rent up front.

**City Hobo** ([www.cityhobo.com](http://www.cityhobo.com)) Matches your personality with your ideal big-city suburb.

**Couch Surfing** ([www.couchsurfing.com](http://www.couchsurfing.com)) Connects spare couches with new friends.

**Flatmate Finders** ([www.flatmatefinders.com.au](http://www.flatmatefinders.com.au)) Long-term share-accommodation listings.

**Gumtree** ([www.gumtree.com.au](http://www.gumtree.com.au)) Classified site with jobs, accommodation and items for sale.

**Stayz** ([www.stayz.com.au](http://www.stayz.com.au)) Holiday rentals.

### Other Accommodation

There are lots of less-conventional and, in some cases, uniquely Australian accommodation possibilities scattered across the country.

### HOUSEBOATING

Houseboating is big business on the Murray River.

Meandering along the river is great fun; you just need to be over 18 with a current driving licence. Boats depart most riverside towns in northwest Victoria and South Australia (SA); book ahead, especially between October and April.

➔ The **Houseboat Hires Association** ([☎](tel)1300 665 122, 08-8231 8466; [www.houseboatbookings.com](http://www.houseboatbookings.com)) Has pictures of each boat and can make bookings on your behalf.

➔ SA Tourism's *Houseboat Holidays* booklet contains detailed houseboat listings.

➔ For houseboating in Mildura, see p608.

➔ For houseboats in Echuca, see p615.

### COUNTRY FARMS

Country farms sometimes offer a bed for a night, while some remote outback stations allow you to stay in homestead rooms or shearers' quarters and try activities such as horse riding. Check out **Hosted Accommodation Australia** ([www.australianbedandbreakfast.com.au](http://www.australianbedandbreakfast.com.au)) and **Farmstay Camping Australia** ([www.farmstaycampingaustralia.com.au](http://www.farmstaycampingaustralia.com.au)) for options. State tourist offices can also help.

### UNIVERSITIES

Back within city limits, it's sometimes possible to stay in the hostels and halls of residence normally occupied by university students, though you'll need to time your stay to coincide with the longer university-holiday periods.

## Children

If you can survive the long distances between cities, travelling around Australia with the kids can be a real delight. There's oodles of interesting stuff to see and do, both indoors and outdoors.

Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* contains plenty of useful information.

## Practicalities

**Accommodation** Many motels and the better-equipped caravan parks have playgrounds and swimming pools, and can supply cots and baby baths; motels may also have in-house children's videos and child-minding services. Top-end hotels and many (but not all) midrange hotels are well versed in the needs of guests with children. B&Bs, on the other hand, often market themselves as kid free.

**Change rooms and breastfeeding** All cities and most major towns have centrally located public rooms where parents can go to nurse their baby or change a nappy; check with the local tourist office or city council for details. Most Australians have a relaxed attitude about breastfeeding and nappy changing in public.

**Child care** Australia's numerous licensed child-care agencies offer babysitting services. Check under 'Baby Sitters' and 'Child Care Centres' in the *Yellow Pages* telephone directory, or phone the local council for a list. Licensed centres are subject to government regulations and usually adhere to high standards; avoid unlicensed operators.

**Child safety seats** Major hire-car companies will supply and fit child safety seats, charging a one-off fee of around \$25. Call taxi companies in advance to organise child safety seats. The rules for travelling in taxis with kids vary from state to state: in most places safety seats aren't legally required but must be used if available.

**Concessions** Child concessions (and family rates) often apply to accommodation, tours, admission fees and transport, with some discounts as high as 50% of the adult rate. However, the definition of 'child' varies from under 12 to under 18 years. Accommodation concessions generally apply to children under 12 years sharing the same room as adults.

**Eating out** Many cafes and restaurants offer kids' meals, or will provide small serves from the main menu. Some also supply high chairs.

**Health care** Australia has high-standard medical services and facilities, and items such as baby formula and disposable nappies are widely available.

## Customs Regulations

For detailed information on customs and quarantine regulations, contact the **Australian Customs & Border Protection Service** (☎1300 363 263, 02-6275 6666; [www.customs.gov.au](http://www.customs.gov.au)).

When entering Australia you can bring most articles in free of duty provided that customs is satisfied they are for personal use and that you'll be taking them with you when you leave. Duty-free quotas per person (note the unusually low figure for cigarettes):

**Alcohol** 2.25L (over the age of 18)

**Cigarettes** 50 cigarettes (over the age of 18)

**Dutiable goods** Up to the value of \$900 (\$450 for people under 18)

Narcotics, of course, are illegal, and customs inspectors and their highly trained hounds are diligent in sniffing them out. Quarantine regulations are strict, so you *must* declare all goods of animal or vegetable origin – wooden spoons, straw hats, the lot. Fresh food (meat, cheese,

fruit, vegetables etc) and flowers are prohibited. There are disposal bins located in airports where you can dump any questionable items if you don't want to bother with an inspection. You must declare currency in excess of \$10,000 (including foreign currency).

## Discount Cards

Travellers over 60 with some form of identification (eg a state-issued seniors card or overseas equivalent) are sometimes eligible for concession prices for public transport.

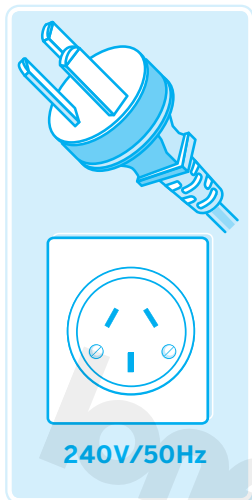
The internationally recognised **International Student Identity Card** (ISIC; [www.isic.org](http://www.isic.org)) is available to full-time students aged 12 and over. The card gives the bearer discounts on accommodation, transport and admission to various attractions. The same organisation also produces the International Youth Travel Card (IYTC), issued to people under 26 years of age and not full-time students, and has benefits equivalent to the ISIC; also similar is the International Teacher Identity Card (ITIC), available to teaching professionals. All three cards are available online (from the ISIC website) and from student travel companies (\$30).

## INTERSTATE QUARANTINE

When travelling within Australia, whether by land or air, you'll come across signs (mainly in airports and interstate train stations and at state borders) warning of the possible dangers of carrying fruit, vegetables and plants from one area to another. Certain pests and diseases (fruit fly, cucurbit thrips, grape phylloxera...) are prevalent in some areas but not in others: authorities would like to limit them spreading.

There are quarantine inspection posts on some state borders and occasionally elsewhere. While quarantine control often relies on honesty, many posts are staffed and officers are entitled to search your car for undeclared items. Generally they will confiscate all fresh fruit and vegetables, so it's best to leave shopping for these items until the first town past the inspection point.

## Electricity



## Embassies & Consulates

The main diplomatic representations are in Canberra. There are also consulates in other major cities, particularly for countries with a strong link to Australia, such as the USA, the UK and New Zealand, or in cities with important connections, such as Darwin, which has an Indonesian consulate.

**Canadian Embassy** Canberra (☎02-6270 4000; www.australia.gc.ca; Commonwealth Ave, Canberra, ACT); Sydney (☎02-9364 3000; www.australia.gc.ca; Level 5, 111 Harrington St, Sydney, NSW; ☒Circular Quay)

**Chinese Embassy** (☎02-6228 3999; http://au.china-embassy.org/eng; 15 Coronation Dr, Yarralumla, ACT)

**Dutch Embassy** Canberra (☎02-6220 9400; www.netherlands.org.au; 120 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT); Sydney (☎02-9387 6644; http://australia.nlemembassy.org; L23, 101 Grafton St, Bondi Junction, NSW; ☎10am-1pm Mon-Fri; ☒Bondi Junction)

**French Embassy** Canberra (☎02-6216 0100; www.ambafrance-au.org; 6 Perth Ave, Yarralumla, ACT); Sydney (☎02-9268 2400; www.ambafrance-au.org; Level 26, St Martins Tower, 31 Market St, Sydney, NSW; ☒Town Hall)

**German Embassy** Canberra (☎02-6270 1911; www.canberra.diplo.de; 119 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT); Sydney (☎02-9328 7733; www.australien.diplo.de; 13 Trelawney St, Woollahra, NSW; ☒Edgecliff)

**Irish Embassy** (☎02-6214 0000; www.embassyofireland.au.com; 20 Arkana St, Yarralumla, ACT)

**Japanese Embassy** Canberra (☎02-6273 3244; www.au.emb-japan.go.jp; 112 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT); Sydney (☎02-9250 1000; www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp; Level 12, 1 O'Connell St, Sydney, NSW; ☒Circular Quay)

**Malaysian Embassy** (☎02-6120 0300; www.malaysia.org.au; 7 Perth Ave, Yarralumla, ACT)

**New Zealand Embassy** Canberra (☎08-6270 4211; www.nzembassy.com; Commonwealth Ave, Canberra, ACT); Sydney (☎02-8256 2000; www.nzembassy.com; Level 10, 55 Hunter St, Sydney, NSW; ☒Martin Place)

**Singaporean Embassy** (☎02-6271-2000; www.mfa.gov.sg/canberra; 17 Forster Cres, Yarralumla, ACT)

**South African Embassy** (☎02-6272 7300; www.sahc.org.au; cnr Rhodes Pl & State Circle, Yarralumla, ACT)

**Thai Embassy** (☎02-6206 0100; http://canberra.thaiembassy.org; 111 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT)

**UK Embassy** Canberra (☎02-6270 6666; www.ukinaustralia.fco.gov.uk; Commonwealth Ave, Yarralumla, ACT); Melbourne (☎03-9652 1600; www.gov.uk; Level 17, 90 Collins St, Melbourne, VIC); Sydney (☎02-9247 7521; www.gov.uk; Level 16, Gateway Bldg, 1 Macquarie Pl, Sydney, NSW; ☒Circular Quay)

**US Embassy** Canberra (☎02-6214 5600; http://canberra.usembassy.gov; 1 Moonah Pl, Yarralumla, ACT); Melbourne (☎03-9526 5900; http://melbourne.usconsulate.gov; Level 6, 553 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne, VIC); Sydney (☎02-8278 1420; http://sydney.usconsulate.gov; Level 10, MLC Centre, 19-29 Martin Pl, Sydney, NSW)

## Food

See the Food & Drink chapter, p1062.

In our reviews, we use the following price ranges to refer to a standard main course:

**\$** less than \$15

**\$\$** \$15 to \$32

**\$\$\$** more than \$32

## Gay & Lesbian Travellers

Australia is a popular destination for gay and lesbian travellers, with the so-called 'pink tourism' appeal of Sydney especially big, thanks largely to the city's annual, high-profile and spectacular Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras. In general, Australians are open-minded about homosexuality, but the further from the cities you get, the more likely you are to run into overt homophobia.

Throughout the country, but particularly on the east coast, there are tour operators, travel agents and accommodation places that make a point of welcoming gay and lesbian guests.

Same-sex acts are legal in all states but the age of consent varies.

## Major Gay & Lesbian Events

**Midsumma Festival** (www.midsumma.org.au) Melbourne's annual gay-and-lesbian arts fest features more than 100 events mid-January to mid-February, with a Pride March finale.

**Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras** ([www.mardigras.org.au](http://www.mardigras.org.au)) A two-week festival culminating in the world-famous massive parade and party on the first Saturday in March.

**Brisbane Pride Festival** ([www.brisbanepridefestival.com.au](http://www.brisbanepridefestival.com.au)) Brisbane's annual gay and lesbian celebration is held over four weeks in September (some events in June, including the fab Queen's Ball).

**Pridefest** ([www.pridewa.com.au](http://www.pridewa.com.au)) In November in Perth.

**Feast Festival** ([www.feast.org.au](http://www.feast.org.au)) Adelaide's big-ticket gay-and-lesbian festival happens over two weeks in November, with a carnival, theatre, dialogue and dance.

## Resources

Gay newspapers are found in clubs, cafes, venues and newsagents in major cities. Gay and lesbian lifestyle magazines include *DNA*, *Lesbians on the Loose (LOTL)* and Sydney-based *SX*. In Melbourne look for *MCV*; in Queensland look for *Queensland Pride*. Perth has the free *OstinPerth* and Adelaide has *Blaze*.

**Gay & Lesbian Tourism Australia** (Galta; [www.galta.com.au](http://www.galta.com.au)). General info.

**Same Same** ([www.samesame.com.au](http://www.samesame.com.au)) News, events and lifestyle features.

## Health

Healthwise, Australia is a remarkably safe country in which to travel, considering that such a large portion of it lies in the tropics. Few travellers to Australia will experience anything worse than an upset stomach or a bad hangover and, if you do fall ill, the standard of hospitals and health care is high.

See also the **Deadly & Dangerous** chapter, p1070.

## Vaccinations

Visit a physician four to eight weeks before departure. Ask your doctor for an International Certificate of

Vaccination (aka the 'yellow booklet'), which will list the vaccinations you've received.

Upon entering Australia, you'll be required to fill out a 'travel history card' detailing any visits to Ebola-affected regions within the last 21 days.

If you're entering Australia within six days of having stayed overnight or longer in a yellow-fever-infected country, you'll need proof of yellow-fever vaccination. For a full list of these countries visit **Centers for Disease Control & Prevention** ([www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)).

The **World Health Organization** ([www.who.int](http://www.who.int)) recommends that all travellers should be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella, chicken pox and polio, as well as hepatitis B, regardless of their destination. While Australia has high levels of childhood vaccination coverage, outbreaks of these diseases do occur.

## Health Insurance

Health insurance is essential for all travellers; see p1078.

## Internet Resources

There's a wealth of travel health advice on the internet: **Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)) is a good place to start. The **World Health Organization** ([www.who.int/ith](http://www.who.int/ith)) publishes *International Travel and Health*, revised annually and available free online.

**MD Travel Health** ([www.mdtravelhealth.com](http://www.mdtravelhealth.com)) provides complete travel health recommendations for every country, updated daily. Government travel health websites include the following:

**Australia** ([www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au))

**Canada** ([www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca))

**UK** ([www.nhs.uk/livewell/travelhealth](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/travelhealth))

**USA** ([www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel))

## Availability & Cost of Health Care

**Facilities** Australia has an excellent health-care system. It's a

mixture of privately run medical clinics and hospitals alongside a system of public hospitals funded by the Australian government. There are also excellent specialised public-health facilities for women and children in major centres.

**Medicare** The Medicare system covers Australian residents for some health-care costs. Visitors from countries with which Australia has a reciprocal health-care agreement – New Zealand, the Republic of Ireland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, Italy, Belgium, Malta, Slovenia, Norway and the UK – are eligible for benefits specified under the Medicare program. See [www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/dhs/medicare](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/dhs/medicare).

**Medications** Painkillers, anti-histamines for allergies, and skincare products are widely available at chemists throughout Australia. You may find that medications readily available over the counter in some countries are only available in Australia by prescription. These include the oral contraceptive pill, some medications for asthma and all antibiotics.

## Health Care in Remote Areas

In Australia's remote locations, it is possible there'll be a significant delay in emergency services reaching you in the event of serious accident or illness. Do not underestimate the vast distances between most major outback towns; an increased level of self-reliance and preparation is essential. The **Royal Flying Doctor Service** ([www.flyingdoctor.org.au](http://www.flyingdoctor.org.au)) provides an important backup for remote communities.

Consider taking a wilderness first-aid course, such as those offered by **Wilderness First Aid Consultants** ([www.wfac.com.au](http://www.wfac.com.au)). Take a comprehensive first-aid kit that is appropriate for the activities planned.

Ensure that you have adequate means of communication. Australia has extensive mobile-phone coverage, but

additional radio communication (such as a satellite phone) is important for remote areas.

## Medical Checklist

- ➔ acetaminophen (paracetamol) or aspirin
- ➔ antibiotics
- ➔ anti-diarrhoeal drugs (eg loperamide)
- ➔ antihistamines (for hayfever and allergic reactions)
- ➔ anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)
- ➔ antibacterial ointment in case of cuts or abrasions
- ➔ steroid cream or cortisone (for allergic rashes)
- ➔ bandages, gauze, gauze rolls
- ➔ adhesive or paper tape
- ➔ scissors, safety pins, tweezers
- ➔ thermometer
- ➔ pocket knife
- ➔ DEET-containing insect repellent for the skin
- ➔ permethrin-containing insect spray for clothing, tents and bed nets
- ➔ sunscreen
- ➔ oral rehydration salts
- ➔ iodine tablets or water filter (for water purification)

## Insurance

Worldwide travel insurance is available at [www.lonelyplanet.com/travel\\_services](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services). You can buy, extend and claim online anytime – even if you're already on the road.

**Level of Cover** A good travel insurance policy covering theft, loss and medical problems is essential. Some policies specifically exclude designated 'dangerous activities' such as scuba diving, skiing and even bushwalking. Make sure the policy you choose fully covers you for your activity of choice.

**Car** See p1093 for information on vehicle insurance.

**Health** You may prefer a policy that pays doctors or hospitals directly rather than requiring you to pay on the spot and claim later. If you have to claim later, make sure you keep all documentation. Check that the policy covers ambulances and emergency medical evacuations by air.

## Internet Access

### Access

There are fewer internet cafes around these days than there were five years ago (thanks to the advent of iPhones/iPads and wi-fi) but you'll still find them in most sizeable towns. Hourly costs range from \$6 to \$10. Most accommodation is phasing out internet terminals and kiosks in favour of wi-fi.

Most public libraries have internet access, but generally it's provided for research needs, not for travellers to check Facebook – so book ahead or find an internet cafe.

### BYO ISPS

If you're bringing your palm-top or laptop, check with your Internet Service Provider (ISP) for access numbers you can dial into in Australia. Some major Australian ISPs:

**Australia On Line** (☎1300 650 661; [www.ozonline.com.au](http://www.ozonline.com.au))

**Dodo** (☎13 36 36; [www.dodo.com](http://www.dodo.com))

**iinet** (☎13 19 17; [www.iinet.net.au](http://www.iinet.net.au))

**iPrimus** (☎13 17 89; [www.iprimus.com.au](http://www.iprimus.com.au))

**Optus** (☎1800 780 219; [www.optus.com.au](http://www.optus.com.au))

**Telstra** (☎13 76 63; [www.telstra.com.au](http://www.telstra.com.au))

### MODEM

Keep in mind that your PC-card modem may not work in Australia. The safest option is to buy a reputable 'global' modem before you leave home or buy a local PC-card

modem once you get to Australia.

### Wi-Fi

It's still rare in remote Australia, but wireless internet access is increasingly the norm in urban Australian accommodation (often free for guests). Cafes, bars and even some public gardens and town squares also provide wi-fi access. For locations, visit [www.freewifi.com.au](http://www.freewifi.com.au).

## Legal Matters

Most travellers will have no contact with Australia's police or legal system; if they do, it's most likely to be while driving.

**Driving** There's a significant police presence on central Australian roads, and police have the power to stop your car, see your licence (you're required to carry it), check your vehicle for roadworthiness, and insist that you take a breath test for alcohol (and sometimes illicit drugs).

**Drugs** First-time offenders caught with small amounts of illegal drugs are likely to receive a fine rather than go to jail, but the recording of a conviction against you may affect your visa status.

**Visas** If you remain in Australia beyond the life of your visa, you'll officially be an 'overstayer' and could face detention and then be prevented from returning to Australia for up to three years.

**Arrested?** It's your right to telephone a friend, lawyer or relative before questioning begins. Legal aid is available only in serious cases; for Legal Aid office info see [www.nationallegalaid.org](http://www.nationallegalaid.org). However, many solicitors do not charge for an initial consultation.

## Money

The Australian dollar comprises 100 cents. There are 5c, 10c, 20c, 50c, \$1 and \$2 coins, and \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 notes. Prices in shops are often marked in single cents then rounded

to the nearest 5c when you come to pay.

In this book, prices refer to the Australian dollar.

## ATMs & Eftpos

**ATMs** Australia's 'big four' banks – ANZ, Commonwealth, National Australia Bank and Westpac – and affiliated banks have branches all over Australia, plus a slew of 24-hour automated teller machines (ATMs). But don't expect to find ATMs *everywhere*, certainly not off the beaten track or in small towns. Most ATMs accept cards issued by other banks (for a fee) and are linked to international networks.

**Eftpos** Most service stations, supermarkets, restaurants, cafes and shops have Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale (Eftpos) facilities these days, allowing you to make purchases and even draw out cash with your credit or debit card.

**Fees** Bear in mind that withdrawing cash via ATMs or Eftpos may attract significant fees; check the associated costs with your bank first.

## Opening a Bank Account

**Within six weeks** If you're planning on staying in Australia a while (on a Working Holiday visa for instance), it makes sense to open a local bank account. This is easy enough for overseas visitors provided it's done within six weeks of arrival. Simply present your passport and provide the bank with a postal address and they'll open the account and send you an ATM card.

**After six weeks** ...it becomes much more complicated. A points system operates and you need to score a minimum of 100 points before you can have the privilege of letting the bank take your money. Passports or birth certificates are worth 70 points; an international driving licence with photo earns you 40 points; and minor IDs, such as credit cards, get you 25 points. You must have at least one ID with a photograph. Once the account is open, you should be able to have money

transferred from your home account (for a fee, of course).

**Before you arrive** It's possible to set up an Australian bank account before you embark on your international trip and applications can be made online; check bank websites for details:

**ANZ** ([www.anz.com.au](http://www.anz.com.au))

**Commonwealth Bank** ([www.commbank.com.au](http://www.commbank.com.au))

**National Australia Bank** (NAB; [www.nab.com.au](http://www.nab.com.au))

**Westpac** ([www.westpac.com.au](http://www.westpac.com.au))

## Credit Cards

Credit cards such as Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted for everything from a hostel bed or a restaurant meal to an adventure tour, and are pretty much essential (in lieu of a large deposit) for hiring a car. They can also be used to get cash advances over the counter at banks and from many ATMs, depending on the card, though these transactions incur immediate interest. Diners Club and American Express (Amex) are not as widely accepted.

Lost credit-card contact numbers:

**American Express** (☎1300 132 639; [www.americanexpress.com.au](http://www.americanexpress.com.au))

**Diners Club** (☎1300 360 060; [www.dinersclub.com.au](http://www.dinersclub.com.au))

**MasterCard** (☎1800 120 113; [www.mastercard.com.au](http://www.mastercard.com.au))

**Visa** (☎1800 450 346; [www.visa.com.au](http://www.visa.com.au))

## Debit Cards

A debit card allows you to draw money directly from your home bank account using ATMs, banks or Eftpos machines. Any card connected to the international banking network – Cirrus, Maestro, Plus and Eurocard – should work with your PIN. Expect substantial fees.

Companies such as Travelex offer debit cards with set withdrawal fees and a balance you can top up from your personal bank account while on the road.

## Exchanging Money

Changing foreign currency (or travellers cheques, if you're still using them) is usually no problem at banks throughout Australia, or at licensed money changers such as Travelex or Amex in cities and major towns.

## Taxes & Refunds

### Goods & Services Tax (GST)

The GST is a flat 10% tax on all goods and services: accommodation, eating out, transport, electrical and other goods, books, furniture, clothing etc. There are exceptions, however, such as basic foods (milk, bread, fruit and vegetables etc). By law the tax is included in the quoted or shelf price, so all prices are GST-inclusive. International air and sea travel to/from Australia is GST-free, as is domestic air travel when purchased outside Australia by nonresidents.

**Refund of GST** If you purchase goods with a total minimum value of \$300 from any one supplier no more than 30 days before you leave Australia, you are entitled under the Tourist Refund Scheme (TRS) to a refund of any GST paid. The scheme only applies to goods you take with you as hand luggage or wear onto the plane or ship. Also note that the refund is valid for goods bought from more than one supplier, but only if at least \$300 is spent in each. For more info, see the website of the **Australian Customs & Border Protection Service** (☎1300 363 263, 02-6275 6666; [www.customs.gov.au](http://www.customs.gov.au)).

**Income Tax** Visitors entitled to work pay tax on earnings made within Australia, and must lodge a tax return with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). If too much tax was withheld from your pay, you will receive a refund. See the **Australian Taxation Office** ([www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au)) website for details.

## Travellers Cheques

➔ The ubiquity and convenience of internationally linked credit- and debit-card facilities in Australia means that

travellers cheques are virtually redundant.

➔ Amex and Travelex will exchange their associated travellers cheques, and major banks will change travellers cheques also.

➔ In all instances you'll need to present your passport for identification when cashing them.

## Opening Hours

Business hours vary from state to state, but use the following as a guide. Note that nearly all attractions across Australia are closed on Christmas Day; many also close on New Years Day and Good Friday.

**Banks** 9.30am to 4pm Monday to Thursday; until 5pm on Friday. Some large city branches open 8am to 6pm weekdays; a few also till 9pm Friday.

**Cafes** All-day affairs opening from around 7am until around 5pm, or continuing their business into the night.

**Petrol stations and roadhouses** Usually open 8am to 10pm. Some urban service stations open 24 hours.

**Post offices** 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday; some from 9am to noon on Saturday. You can also buy stamps from newsagents and some delis.

**Pubs** Usually serve food from noon to 2pm and from 6pm to 8pm. Pubs and bars often open for drinking at lunchtime and continue well into the evening, particularly from Thursday to Saturday.

**Restaurants** Open around noon for lunch and from 6pm for dinner, typically serving until at least 2pm and 9pm respectively, often later. Big-city eateries keep longer hours.

**Shops and businesses** 9am to 5pm or 6pm Monday to Friday, until either noon or 5pm on Saturday. Sunday trading operates in major cities, urban areas and tourist towns. There

is late-night shopping till 9pm in major towns (usually Thursday or Friday night).

**Supermarkets** Generally open from 7am until at least 8pm; some open 24 hours. Delis (general stores) also open late.

## Photography

**Availability and printing** If you're not happily snapping away with your smartphone, digital cameras, memory sticks and batteries are sold prolifically in cities and urban centres. Try electronics stores (Dick Smith, Tandy) or the larger department stores. Many internet cafes, camera stores and large stationers (Officeworks, Harvey Norman) have printing facilities.

**Books** Check out Lonely Planet's *Travel Photography* guide.

**Etiquette** As in any country, politeness goes a long way when taking photographs; ask before taking pictures of people. Particularly bear in mind that for Indigenous Australians, photography can be highly intrusive: photographing cultural places, practices and images, sites of significance and ceremonies may also be a sensitive matter. Always ask first.

## Post

**Australia Post** ([www.auspost.com.au](http://www.auspost.com.au)) runs very reliable national and worldwide postal services; see the website for info on international delivery zones and rates. All post offices will hold mail for visitors: you need to provide some form of identification (such as a passport or driver's licence) to collect mail.

## Public Holidays

Timing of public holidays can vary from state to state: check locally for precise dates. Some holidays are only observed locally within a state; where this is the case, the relevant town, city or region is also listed.

## National

**New Year's Day** 1 January

**Australia Day** 26 January

**Easter** (Good Friday to Easter Monday inclusive) late March/early April

**Anzac Day** 25 April

**Queen's Birthday** (except WA) Second Monday in June

**Queen's Birthday** (WA) Last Monday in September

**Christmas Day** 25 December

**Boxing Day** 26 December

## Australian Capital Territory

**Canberra Day** Second Monday in March

**Bank Holiday** First Monday in August

**Labour Day** First Monday in October

## New South Wales

**Bank Holiday** First Monday in August

**Labour Day** First Monday in October

## Northern Territory

**May Day** First Monday in May

**Show Day** First Friday in July (Alice Springs); second Friday in July (Tennant Creek); third Friday in July (Katherine); fourth Friday in July (Darwin)

**Picnic Day** First Monday in August

## Queensland

**Labour Day** First Monday in May

**Royal Queensland Show Day** Second or third Wednesday in August (Brisbane)

## South Australia

**Adelaide Cup Day** Third Monday in May

**Labour Day** First Monday in October

**Proclamation Day** Last Monday or Tuesday in December

## Tasmania

**Regatta Day** 14 February (Hobart)

**Launceston Cup Day** Last Wednesday in February

**Eight Hours Day** First Monday in March

**Bank Holiday** Tuesday following Easter Monday

**King Island Show** First Tuesday in March

**Launceston Show Day** Thursday preceding second Saturday in October

**Hobart Show Day** Thursday preceding fourth Saturday in October

**Recreation Day** First Monday in November (Northern Tasmania)

## Victoria

**Labour Day** Second Monday in March

**Melbourne Cup Day** First Tuesday in November

## Western Australia

**Labour Day** First Monday in March

**Foundation Day** First Monday in June

## School Holidays

➔ The Christmas/summer school-holiday season runs from mid-December to late January.

➔ Three shorter school-holiday periods occur during the year, varying by a week or two from state to state. They fall roughly from early to mid-April (usually including Easter), late June to mid-July, and late September to early October.

## Safe Travel

Australia is a relatively safe place to travel by world standards – in terms of crime and war, at any rate – but natural disasters regularly wreak havoc. Bushfires, floods and cyclones decimate parts of most states and territories, but if you pay attention to warnings from local authorities and don't venture into affected areas, you should be fine.

## GOVERNMENT TRAVEL ADVICE

The following government websites offer travel advisories and information on current hotspots.

**Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade** ([www.smarttraveller.gov.au](http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au))

**British Foreign & Commonwealth Office** ([www.gov.uk/fco](http://www.gov.uk/fco))

**Government of Canada** ([www.travel.gc.ca](http://www.travel.gc.ca))

**US State Department** ([www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov))

## Telephone

Australia's main telecommunication companies:

**Telstra** (☎13 22 00; [www.telstra.com.au](http://www.telstra.com.au))

**Optus** (☎1800 780 219; [www.optus.com.au](http://www.optus.com.au))

**Vodafone** (☎1300 650 410; [www.vodafone.com.au](http://www.vodafone.com.au))

**Virgin** (☎1300 555 100; [www.virginmobile.com.au](http://www.virginmobile.com.au))

## Toll-Free & Information Calls

➔ Many businesses have either a toll-free ☎1800 number, dialled from anywhere within Australia for free, or a ☎13 or ☎1300 number, charged at a local call rate. None of these numbers can be dialled from outside Australia (and often can't be dialled from mobile phones within Australia).

➔ To make a reverse-charge (collect) call from any public or private phone, dial ☎1800 738 3773 or ☎12 550.

➔ Numbers starting with 190 are usually recorded information services, charged at anything from 35c to \$5 or more per minute (more from mobiles and payphones).

## International Calls

**From payphones** Most payphones allow International Subscriber Dialling (ISD) calls, the cost and international dialling code of which will vary depending on which international phonecard

provider you are using. International phonecards are readily available from internet cafes and convenience stores.

**From landlines** International calls from landlines in Australia are also relatively cheap and often subject to special deals; rates vary with providers.

**Codes** When calling overseas you will need to dial the international access code from Australia (☎0011 or ☎0018), the country code and then the area code (without the initial ☎0). So for a London telephone number you'll need to dial ☎0011-44-20, then the number. In addition, certain operators will have you dial a special code to access their service. If dialling Australia from overseas, the country code is ☎61 and you need to drop the ☎0 in state/territory area codes. Other country codes:

COUNTRY	CODE
France	33
Germany	49
Ireland	353
Japan	81
Netherlands	31
New Zealand	64
UK	44
USA & Canada	1

## Local Calls

Local calls from private phones cost up to 30c, depending on the provider; local calls from public phones cost 50c. Calls to mobile phones attract higher rates and are timed.



## Long-Distance Calls & Area Codes

Long-distance calls (over around 50km) are timed. Australia uses four Subscriber Trunk Dialling (STD) area codes. These STD calls can be made from any public phone and are cheaper during off-peak hours (generally between 7pm and 7am, and on weekends). Broadly, the main area codes are as follows.

STATE/ TERRITORY	AREA CODE
ACT	02
NSW	02
NT	08
QLD	07
SA	08
TAS	03
VIC	03
WA	08

Area-code boundaries don't necessarily coincide with state borders; for example some parts of NSW use the neighbouring states' codes.

## Mobile (Cell) Phones

**Numbers** Numbers with the prefix 04xx belong to mobile phones.

**Networks** Australia's digital network is compatible with GSM 900 and 1800 (used in Europe), but generally not with the systems used in the USA or Japan.

**Reception** Australia's mobile networks service more than 90% of the population but leave vast tracts of the country uncovered.

**Providers** It's easy enough to get connected short-term: the main service providers (Telstra, Optus, Virgin and Vodafone) all have prepaid mobile systems. Buy a starter kit, which may include a phone or, if you have your own phone, a SIM card and a prepaid charge card. Shop around for the best offer.

## Phonecards & Public Phones

**Phonecards** A variety of phonecards can be bought at newsagents, hostels and post offices for a fixed dollar value (usually \$10, \$20 etc) and can be used with any public or private phone by dialling a toll-free access number and then the PIN number on the card. Shop around.

**Public Phones** Most public phones use phonecards; some also accept credit cards. Old-fashioned coin-operated public phones are becoming increasingly rare (and if you do find one, chances are the coin slot will be gummed up or vandalised beyond function).

## Time

**Zones** Australia is divided into three time zones: Western Standard Time (GMT/UTC plus eight hours), covering WA; Central Standard Time (plus 9½ hours), covering SA and the NT; and Eastern Standard Time (plus 10 hours), covering Tasmania, Victoria, NSW, the ACT and Queensland. There are minor exceptions – Broken Hill (NSW), for instance, is on Central Standard Time. For international times, see [www.timeanddate.com/worldclock](http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock).

**Daylight saving** Clocks are put forward an hour. This system operates in some states during the warmer months (October to early April), but things can get pretty confusing. Queensland, WA and the NT stay on standard time, while in Tasmania daylight saving starts a month earlier than in SA, Victoria, ACT and NSW.

## Toilets

➔ Toilets in Australia are sit-down Western-style (though you mightn't find this prospect too appealing in some remote outback pit stops).

➔ See [www.toiletmap.gov.au](http://www.toiletmap.gov.au) for public-toilet locations, including disabled-access toilets.

## Tourist Information

The **Australian Tourist Commission** ([www.australia.com](http://www.australia.com)) is the national government tourist body, and has a good website for pretrip research. The website also lists reliable travel agents in countries around the world to help you plan your trip, plus visa, work and customs information.

Within Australia, tourist information is disseminated by various regional and local offices. Almost every major town in Australia has a tourist office of some type and they can be super-helpful, with chatty staff (often retiree volunteers) providing local info not readily available from the state offices. If booking accommodation or tours from local offices, bear in mind that they often only promote businesses that are paying members of the local tourist association.

## Travellers with Disabilities

➔ Disability awareness in Australia is high and getting higher.

➔ Legislation requires that new accommodation meets accessibility standards for mobility-impaired travellers, and discrimination by tourism operators is illegal.

➔ Many of Australia's key attractions, including many national parks, provide access for those with limited mobility and a number of sites also address the needs of visitors with visual or aural impairments. Contact attractions in advance to confirm the facilities.

→ Tour operators with vehicles catering to mobility-impaired travellers operate from most capital cities.

→ Facilities for wheelchairs are improving in accommodation, but there are still many older establishments where the necessary upgrades haven't been done.

## Resources

**Deaf Australia** ([www.deafau.org.au](http://www.deafau.org.au))

**e-Bility** ([www.ebility.com](http://www.ebility.com))

**Lonely Planet's Accessible Melbourne** ([www.lonelyplanet.com/accessible-melbourne](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/accessible-melbourne))

**National Information Communication & Awareness Network** (Nican; ☎02-6241 1220, TTY 1800 806 769; [www.nican.com.au](http://www.nican.com.au))

**Spinal Cord Injuries Australia** (SCIA; ☎1800 819 775; [www.spinalcordinjuries.com.au](http://www.spinalcordinjuries.com.au))

**Vision Australia** (☎1300 847 466; [www.visionaustralia.org](http://www.visionaustralia.org))

## Air Travel

**Qantas** ([www.qantas.com.au](http://www.qantas.com.au)) entitles a disabled person with high-support needs and the carer travelling with them to a discount on full economy fares; contact Nican for eligibility info and an application form. Guide dogs travel for free on **Qantas**, **Jetstar** ([www.jetstar.com.au](http://www.jetstar.com.au)),

**Virgin Australia** ([www.virginaustralia.com.au](http://www.virginaustralia.com.au)) and their affiliated carriers. All of Australia's major airports have dedicated parking spaces, wheelchair access to terminals, accessible toilets, and skychairs to convey passengers onto planes via airbridges.

## Train Travel

In NSW, CountryLink's XPT trains have at least one carriage (usually the buffet car) with a seat removed for a wheelchair, and an accessible toilet. Queensland Rail's Tilt Train from Brisbane to Cairns has a wheelchair-accessible carriage.

Melbourne's suburban rail network is accessible and

guide dogs and hearing dogs are permitted on all public transport in Victoria. **Metlink** (☎1800 800 007; [www.ptv.vic.gov.au](http://www.ptv.vic.gov.au)) offers a free travel pass to visually impaired people and wheelchair users for transport around Melbourne.

## Visas

All visitors to Australia need a visa (only New Zealand nationals are exempt, and even they receive a 'special category' visa on arrival). Application forms for the several types of visa are available from Australian diplomatic missions overseas, travel agents or the website of the **Department of Immigration & Citizenship** ([www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au)). Visa types are as follows.

### eVisitor (651)

→ Many European passport holders are eligible for a free eVisitor visa, allowing stays in Australia for up to three months within a 12-month period.

→ eVisitor visas must be applied for online ([www.immi.gov.au/e\\_visa/evisitor.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/e_visa/evisitor.htm)). They are electronically stored and linked to individual passport numbers, so no stamp in your passport is required.

→ It's advisable to apply at least 14 days prior to the proposed date of travel to Australia.

### Electronic Travel Authority (ETA; 601)

→ Passport holders from eight countries which aren't part of the eVisitor scheme – Brunei, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and the USA – can apply for either a visitor or business ETA.

→ ETAs are valid for 12 months, with stays of up to three months on each visit.

→ You can apply for an ETA online ([www.eta.immi](http://www.eta.immi).

[www.eta.immi](http://www.eta.immi)), which attracts a nonrefundable service charge of \$20.

### Visitor (600)

→ Short-term Visitor visas have largely been replaced by the eVisitor and ETA. However, if you are from a country not covered by either, or you want to stay longer than three months, you'll need to apply for a Visitor visa.

→ Standard Visitor visas allow one entry for a stay of up to three, six or 12 months, and are valid for use within 12 months of issue.

→ Apply online at [www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au); costs range from \$130 to \$335.

### Visa Extensions

If you want to stay in Australia for longer than your visa allows, you'll need to apply for a new visa (usually a \$335 Visitor visa 600) via [www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au). Apply at least two or three weeks before your visa expires.

### Working Holiday (417)

→ Young visitors (aged 18 to 30) from Belgium, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Taiwan and the UK are eligible for a Working Holiday visa, which allows you to visit for up to 12 months and gain casual employment.

→ Holders can leave and re-enter Australia any number of times within that 12 months.

→ Holders can only work for any one employer for a maximum of six months.

→ Apply prior to entry to Australia (up to a year in advance) – you can't change from another tourist visa to a Working Holiday visa once you're in Australia.

➔ Conditions include having a return air ticket or sufficient funds (\$5000) for a return or onward fare. Application fee \$420.

➔ Second Working Holiday visas can be applied for once you're in Australia, subject to certain conditions: see [www.immi.gov.au/visas/pages/417.aspx](http://www.immi.gov.au/visas/pages/417.aspx). Application fee \$420.

## Work & Holiday (462)

➔ Nationals from Argentina, Bangladesh, Chile, Indonesia, Malaysia, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, the USA and Uruguay aged between the ages of 18 and 30 can apply for a Work & Holiday visa prior to entry to Australia.

➔ Once granted, this visa allows the holder to enter Australia within three months of issue, stay for up to 12 months, leave and re-enter Australia any number of times within that 12 months, undertake temporary employment to supplement a trip, and study for up to four months.

➔ For details see [www.immi.gov.au/visas/pages/462.aspx](http://www.immi.gov.au/visas/pages/462.aspx). Application fee \$420.

## Volunteering

Lonely Planet's *Volunteer: A Traveller's Guide to Making a Difference Around the World* provides useful information about volunteering.

See also the following websites:

### Australian Volunteers International

([www.australianvolunteers.com](http://www.australianvolunteers.com)) Places skilled volunteers into Indigenous communities in northern and central Australia (mostly long-term placements). Occasional short-term unskilled opportunities too, helping out at community-run roadhouses.

### Conservation Volunteers

**Australia** ([www.conservationvolunteers.com.au](http://www.conservationvolunteers.com.au)) Nonprofit organisation involved in tree

planting, walking-track construction, and flora and fauna surveys.

### Earthwatch Institute Australia

([www.earthwatch.org](http://www.earthwatch.org)) Volunteer expeditions that focus on conservation and wildlife.

### GoVolunteer

([www.govolunteer.com.au](http://www.govolunteer.com.au)) Thousands of volunteering opportunities around the country.

### i to i Volunteering

([www.i-to-i.com](http://www.i-to-i.com)) Conservation-based volunteer holidays in Australia.

### Responsible Travel

([www.responsibletravel.com](http://www.responsibletravel.com)) Travel to Australia and take up a fixed-term volunteering position when you arrive.

### STA

([www.statravel.com.au](http://www.statravel.com.au)) Volunteer holiday opportunities in Australia; click on 'Planning' on the website then the volunteering link.

### Volunteering Australia

([www.volunteeringaustralia.org](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org)) State-by-state listings of volunteering opportunities around Australia.

### Willing Workers on Organic

**Farms** (WWOOF; [www.wwoof.com.au](http://www.wwoof.com.au)) WWOOFing is where you do a few hours work each day on a farm in return for bed and board. Most hosts are concerned to some extent with alternative lifestyles, and have a minimum stay of two nights. Join online for \$70. You'll get a membership number and a booklet listing participating enterprises (\$5 overseas postage).

## Women Travellers

Australia is generally a safe place for women travellers, although the usual sensible precautions apply.

**Night-time** Avoid walking alone late at night in any of the major cities and towns – keep enough money aside for a taxi back to your accommodation.

**Pubs** Be wary of staying in basic pub accommodation unless it looks safe and well managed.

**Sexual harassment** Rare, though some macho Aussie

males still slip – particularly when they've been drinking.

**Rural areas** Stereotypically, the further you get from the big cities, the less enlightened your average Aussie male is probably going to be about women's issues. Having said that, many women travellers say that they have met the friendliest, most down-to-earth blokes in outback pubs and remote roadhouse stops.

**Hitchhiking** Hitching is not recommended for anyone. Even when travelling in pairs, exercise caution at all times.

**Drugged drinks** Some pubs in Sydney and other big cities post warnings about drugged or 'spiked' drinks: probably not cause for paranoia, but play it safe if someone offers you a drink in a bar.

## Work

If you come to Australia on a tourist visa then you're not allowed to work for pay: you'll need a Working Holiday (417) or Work and Holiday (462) visa – visit [www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au) for details.

Backpacker magazines, newspapers and hostel noticeboards are good places to find local work opportunities. Casual work can often be found during peak season at the major tourist centres: places such as Alice Springs, Cairns and resort towns along the Queensland coast, and the ski fields of Victoria and NSW are all good prospects during holiday season. Other possibilities for casual employment include factory work, labouring, bar work, waiting tables, domestic chores at outback roadhouses, nanny work, working as a station hand and collecting for charities. People with computer, secretarial, nursing and teaching skills can find work temping in the major cities by registering with a relevant agency.

See also the following websites, good for opportunities in metropolitan areas:

**Adzuna** ([www.adzuna.com.au](http://www.adzuna.com.au))

**Career One** ([www.careerone.com.au](http://www.careerone.com.au))

**Gumtree** ([www.gumtree.com.au](http://www.gumtree.com.au))

**Seek** ([www.seek.com.au](http://www.seek.com.au))

**TAW** ([www.taw.com.au](http://www.taw.com.au))

## Seasonal Work

Seasonal fruit picking (harvesting) relies on casual labour – there's always something that needs to be picked, pruned or farmed somewhere in Australia all year round. It's definitely hard work, involving early-morning starts, and you're usually paid by how much you pick (per bin, bucket, kilo etc). Expect to earn about \$50 to \$60 a day to start with; more when your skills and speed improve. Some work, such as pruning or sorting, is paid at around \$15 per hour. Call the **National Harvest Telephone Information Service** (☎1800 062 332) for more information about when and where you're likely to pick up this sort of work.

Note that due to the complexities of visa situations, many local visitor information centres and backpacker hostels are stepping away from assisting travellers in finding work. To avoid disappointment, never put a deposit down to reserve a fruit-picking job, and never pay for fruit-picking accommodation in advance.

Additional resources:

**Harvest Trail** ([www.jobsearch.gov.au/harvesttrail](http://www.jobsearch.gov.au/harvesttrail)) Harvest job specialists.

**QITE** ([www.qite.com](http://www.qite.com)) Nonprofit Queensland employment agency operating around Cairns, Innisfail and the Atherton Tablelands.

**Viterra** ([www.viterra.com.au](http://www.viterra.com.au)) Seasonal grain-harvest jobs

in Victoria and SA (October to January).

**Workabout Australia** ([www.workaboutaustralia.com.au](http://www.workaboutaustralia.com.au)) Gives a state-by-state breakdown of seasonal work opportunities.

## Seasonal Work Hotspots

**NSW** The NSW ski fields have seasonal work during the ski season, particularly around Thredbo. There's also harvest work around Narrabri and Moree, and grape picking in the Hunter Valley. Fruit picking happens near Tenterfield, Orange and Young.

**NT** The majority of working-holiday opportunities in the NT for backpackers are in fruit picking, station handing, labouring and hospitality.

**Queensland** Queensland has vast tracts of farmland and orchards: there's fruit picking work to be found around Stanthorpe, Childers, Bundaberg and Cairns. Those looking for sturdier (and much better-paying) work should keep an eye on mining opportunities in mining towns such as Weipa and Cloncurry.

**SA** Good seasonal-work opportunities can be found on the Fleurieu Peninsula, in the Coonawarra region and Barossa Valley (wineries), and along the Murray River around Berri (fruit picking).

**Tasmania** The apple orchards in the south, especially around Cygnet and Huonville, are your best bet for work in Tassie.

**Victoria** Harvest work in Mildura and Shepparton.

**WA** In Perth, plenty of temporary work is available in tourism and hospitality, administration, IT, nursing, child care, factories and labouring. Outside of Perth, travellers can easily get jobs in

tourism and hospitality, plus a variety of seasonal work. For grape-picking work, head for the vineyards around Margaret River.

## Tax

### TAX FILE NUMBER

If you're working in Australia, you should apply for a Tax File Number (TFN). Without it, tax will be deducted at the maximum rate from any wages you receive. Apply for a TFN online via the **Australian Taxation Office** ([www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au)): it takes up to four weeks to be issued.

### PAYING TAX & TAX REFUNDS

Even with a TFN, nonresidents (including Working Holiday visa holders) pay a considerably higher rate of tax than most Australian residents. For a start, there's no tax-free threshold – you pay tax on every dollar you earn.

Because you have been paid wages in Australia, you must lodge a tax return with the ATO: see the website for info on how to do this, including getting a Payment Summary (an official summary of your earnings and tax payments) from your employer, timing/dates for lodging your tax return, and how to receive your Notice of Assessment.

Bear in mind that you're not entitled to a refund for the tax you paid – you will only receive a refund if too much tax was withheld from your pay. If you didn't pay enough while you were working then you will have to pay more. You are, however, entitled to any superannuation that you have accumulated.

# Transport

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Australia is a long way from just about everywhere – getting there usually means a long-haul flight. If you're short on time on the ground, consider internal flights – they're affordable (compared with petrol and car-hire costs), can usually be carbon offset, and will save you some *loong* days in the saddle. Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online at [www.lonelyplanet.com/bookings](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/bookings).

## Entering the Country

Arrival in Australia is usually straightforward and efficient, with the usual customs declarations. There are no restrictions for citizens of any particular foreign countries entering Australia – if you have a current passport and visa, you should be fine.

## Air

High season (with the highest prices) for flights into Australia is roughly over the country's summer (December to February); low season generally tallies with the winter months (June to August), though this is actually peak season in central Australia and the Top End. Australia's international carrier is **Qantas** ([www.qantas.com.au](http://www.qantas.com.au)).

## International Airports

Australia has numerous international gateways, with Sydney and Melbourne being the busiest.

**Adelaide Airport** ([www.adelaideairport.com.au](http://www.adelaideairport.com.au))

**Brisbane Airport** ([www.bne.com.au](http://www.bne.com.au))

**Cairns Airport** ([www.cairnsairport.com](http://www.cairnsairport.com))

**Darwin International Airport** ([www.darwinairport.com.au](http://www.darwinairport.com.au))

**Gold Coast Airport** ([www.goldcoastairport.com.au](http://www.goldcoastairport.com.au))

**Melbourne Airport** ([www.melbourneairport.com.au](http://www.melbourneairport.com.au))

**Perth Airport** ([www.perthairport.com](http://www.perthairport.com))

**Sydney Airport** ([www.sydneyairport.com.au](http://www.sydneyairport.com.au)).

## Sea

It's possible (though by no means easy or safe) to make your way between Australia and countries such as Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, New Zealand and the Pacific islands by hitching rides or crewing on yachts; usually you have to at least contribute towards food. Ask around at marinas and sailing clubs in places like Coffs Harbour, Great Keppel Island, Airlie Beach, the Whitsundays, Darwin and Cairns. April is a good time to look for a berth in the Sydney area.

Alternatively, **P&O Cruises** ([www.pocruises.com.au](http://www.pocruises.com.au)) operates holiday cruises

## CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Every form of transport that relies on carbon-based fuel generates CO<sub>2</sub>, the main cause of human-induced climate change. Modern travel is dependent on aeroplanes, which might use less fuel per kilometre per person than most cars but travel much greater distances. The altitude at which aircraft emit gases (including CO<sub>2</sub>) and particles also contributes to their climate change impact. Many websites offer 'carbon calculators' that allow people to estimate the carbon emissions generated by their journey and, for those who wish to do so, to offset the impact of the greenhouse gases emitted with contributions to portfolios of climate-friendly initiatives throughout the world. Lonely Planet offsets the carbon footprint of all staff and author travel.

between Brisbane, Melbourne or Sydney and destinations in New Zealand and the Pacific. Even more alternatively, some freighter ships allow passengers to travel on-board as they ship cargo to/from Australia: check out websites such as [www.freightererpeditions.com.au](http://www.freightererpeditions.com.au) and [www.freigh-tercruises.com](http://www.freigh-tercruises.com) for options.

## GETTING AROUND

### Air

#### Airlines in Australia

Australia's main domestic airlines are **Qantas** ([www.qantas.com.au](http://www.qantas.com.au)) and **Virgin Australia** ([www.virginaustralia.com.au](http://www.virginaustralia.com.au)), servicing all the main centres with regular flights. **Jetstar** ([www.jetstar.com.au](http://www.jetstar.com.au)), a subsidiary of Qantas, and **Tiger Airways** ([www.tigerair.com](http://www.tigerair.com)), a subsidiary of Singapore Airlines, are generally a bit cheaper and fly between most Australian capital cities. See regional chapters for info on airlines operating locally within Australia's states and territories.

#### Air Passes

Qantas offers a discount-fare Walkabout Air Pass for passengers flying into Australia across the Pacific with Qantas or American Airlines. The pass allows you to link up around 60 domestic Australian destinations for less than you'd pay booking flights individually. See [www.qantas.com.au/travel/airlines/air-pass/us/en](http://www.qantas.com.au/travel/airlines/air-pass/us/en) for details.

### Bicycle

Australia has much to offer cyclists, from bike paths winding through most major cities to thousands of kilometres of good country roads. There's lots of flat countryside and gently rolling hills to explore and, although Australia is not as mountainous as, say, Switzerland or

France, mountain bikers can find plenty of forest trails and high country. If you're really keen, outback cycling might also be an option.

**Hire** Bike hire in cities is easy.

**Legalities** Bike helmets are compulsory in all states and territories, as are white front-lights and red rear-lights for riding at night.

**Maps** You can get by with standard road maps, but to avoid low-grade unsealed roads, the government series is best. The 1:250,000 scale is suitable, though you'll need lots of maps if you're going far. The next scale up is 1:1,000,000.

**Transport** If you're bringing in your own bike, check with your airline for costs and the degree of dismantling or packing required. Within Australia, bus companies require you to dismantle your bike and it may not travel on the same bus as you.

**Weather** In summer carry plenty of water. Wear a helmet with a peak (or a cap under your helmet), use sunscreen and avoid cycling in the middle of the day. Beware summer northerly winds that can make a northbound cyclist's life hell. Southeasterly trade winds blow in April, when you can have (theoretically) tail winds all the way to Darwin. It can get very cold in Victoria, Tasmania, southern South Australia (SA) and the New South Wales (NSW) mountains.

#### Information

The national cycling body is the **Bicycle Federation of Australia** ([www.bfa.asn.au](http://www.bfa.asn.au)). Each state and territory has a touring organisation that can also help with cycling information and put you in touch with touring clubs. **Bicycles Network Australia** ([www.bicycles.net.au](http://www.bicycles.net.au)) offers information, news and links.

**Bicycle Network Tasmania** ([www.biketass.org.au](http://www.biketass.org.au))

**Bicycle Network Victoria** ([www.bicyclenet.com.au](http://www.bicyclenet.com.au))

**Bicycle NSW** ([www.bicyclensw.org.au](http://www.bicyclensw.org.au))

**Bicycle Queensland** ([www.bq.org.au](http://www.bq.org.au))

**Bicycle Transportation Alliance** ([www.btawa.org.au](http://www.btawa.org.au)) In WA.

**Bike SA** ([www.bikesa.asn.au](http://www.bikesa.asn.au))

**Cycling Northern Territory** ([www.nt.cycling.org.au](http://www.nt.cycling.org.au))

**Pedal Power ACT** ([www.pedalpower.org.au](http://www.pedalpower.org.au))

### Buying a Bike

If you want to buy a reliable, new road or mountain bike, your bottom-level starting price will be around \$600. Throw in all the requisite on-the-road equipment (panniers, helmet etc.) and your starting point becomes around \$1600. Secondhand bikes are worth checking out in the cities, as are the post-Christmas sales and mid-year stocktakes, when newish cycles can be heavily discounted.

To sell your bike (or buy a secondhand one), try hostel noticeboards or online at

**Trading Post** ([www.tradingpost.com.au](http://www.tradingpost.com.au)) or **Gumtree** ([www.gumtree.com.au](http://www.gumtree.com.au)).

### Boat

There's a hell of a lot of water around Australia, but unless you're fortunate/skilled/well-connected enough to land a position crewing a yacht, it's not really a feasible way of getting around. Other than short-hop regional ferries (eg to Kangaroo Island in SA, Rottneest Island in Western Australia (WA), Bruny Island in Tasmania, North Stradbroke Island in Queensland), the only long-range passenger services are the two high-speed, vehicle-carrying **Spirit of Tasmania** (☎1800 634 906; [www.spiritoftasmania.com.au](http://www.spiritoftasmania.com.au); ☺customer contact centre 8am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-8pm Sun) boats between Melbourne and Devonport on Tasmania's northwest coast.

### Bus

Australia's extensive bus network is a reliable way to get around, though bus travel

## Principal Bus Routes &amp; Railways



isn't always cheaper than flying and it can be tedious over huge distances. Most buses are equipped with air-con, toilets and videos; all are smoke free. There are no class divisions on Australian buses and the vehicles of the different companies all look pretty similar.

Small towns eschew formal bus terminals for a single drop-off/pick-up point (post office, newsagent etc).

**Greyhound Australia** ([www.greyhound.com.au](http://www.greyhound.com.au)) runs a national network (notably not across the Nullarbor Plain between Adelaide and Perth, nor Perth to Broome). Book online for the cheapest fares.

Other operators:

**Firefly Express** ([www.fireflyexpress.com.au](http://www.fireflyexpress.com.au)) Runs between

Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Adelaide.

**Integrity Coach Lines** ([www.integritycoachlines.com.au](http://www.integritycoachlines.com.au)) The main operator between Perth and Broome in WA.

**Premier Motor Service** ([www.premiers.com.au](http://www.premiers.com.au)) Greyhound's main competitor along the east coast.

**V/Line** ([www.vline.com.au](http://www.vline.com.au)) Connects Victoria with NSW, SA and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

## Greyhound Bus Passes

Greyhound offers a slew of passes geared towards various types and routes of travel: see [www.greyhound.com.au](http://www.greyhound.com.au) / passes for details. Greyhound also offers a discount of up to 10% for members of YHA,

VIP, ISIC and other approved organisations.

## KILOMETRE PASS

These are the simplest passes, giving you specified amounts of travel starting at 1000km (\$189), ascending in increments to a maximum of 25,000km (\$2675). A 5000km pass costs \$785; 10,000km is \$1435. Passes are valid for 12 months, and you can travel where and in whatever direction you please, stopping as many times as you like. Use the online kilometre calculator to figure out which pass suits you. Book at least a day ahead to secure your seat.

## HOP-ON, HOP-OFF & SHORT HOP PASSES

These passes allow you to traverse popular routes,

mostly along the east coast but also between Cairns and Alice Springs and Adelaide and Darwin via Alice Springs. Travel is in one direction, and you can jump on and off buses as many times as you like. Passes are valid for three months once travel begins, with six months in which to get started. Typical prices:

- ➔ Adelaide to Alice Springs \$209
- ➔ Alice Springs to Darwin \$199
- ➔ Cairns to Alice Springs \$369
- ➔ Melbourne to Cairns \$509
- ➔ Sydney to Cairns \$419

See also **Oz Experience** (☎1300 300 028; [www.ozexperience.com](http://www.ozexperience.com)), a backpacker travel option utilising Greyhound services.

## Costs

Following are the average one-way bus fares along some well-travelled routes, booked online:

ROUTE	ADULT/ CHILD
Adelaide–Darwin	\$490/420
Adelaide–Melbourne	\$105/85
Brisbane–Cairns	\$310/270
Cairns–Sydney	\$500/430
Sydney–Brisbane	\$190/160
Sydney–Melbourne	\$135/115

## Car & Motorcycle

### Driving Licence

To drive in Australia you'll need to hold a current driving licence issued in English from your home country. If the licence isn't in English, you'll also need to carry an International Driving Permit, issued in your home country.

### Choosing a Vehicle

**2WD** Depending on where you want to travel, a regulation 2WD

vehicle might suffice. They're cheaper to hire, buy and run than 4WDs and are more readily available. Most are fuel efficient, and easy to repair and sell. Downsides: no off-road capability and no room to sleep!

**4WD** Four-wheel drives are good for outback travel as they can access almost any track you get a hankering for. And there might even be space to sleep in the back. Downsides: poor fuel economy, awkward to park and more expensive to hire/buy.

**Campervan** Creature comforts at your fingertips: sink, fridge, cupboards, beds, kitchen and space to relax. Downsides: slow and often not fuel-efficient, not great on dirt roads and too big for ripping around the city.

**Motorcycle** The Australian climate is great for riding, and bikes are handy in city traffic. Downsides: Australia isn't particularly bike friendly in terms of driver awareness, there's limited luggage capacity, and exposure to the elements.

### Ride-Sharing

Ride-sharing is a good way to split costs and environmental impact with other travellers. Noticeboards are good places to find ads; also check the online classifieds following:

**Catch a Lift** ([www.catchalift.com](http://www.catchalift.com))

**Coseats** ([www.coseats.com](http://www.coseats.com))

**Need a Ride** ([www.needaride.com.au](http://www.needaride.com.au))

### Buying a Vehicle

Buying your own vehicle to travel around in gives you the freedom to go where and when the mood takes you, and may work out cheaper than renting in the long run. Downsides include dealing with confusing and expensive registration, roadworthy certificates and insurance; forking out for maintenance and repairs; and selling the vehicle, which may be more difficult than expected.

If you're buying a second-hand vehicle, keep in mind the hidden costs: stamp duty, registration, transfer fee, insurance and maintenance.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

It's prudent to have a car checked by an independent expert: auto clubs offer vehicle checks, and road transport authorities have lists of licensed garages.

### ONLINE

Private and dealer car sales are listed online on websites such as **Car Sales** ([www.carsales.com.au](http://www.carsales.com.au)), the **Trading Post** ([www.tradingpost.com.au](http://www.tradingpost.com.au)) and **Gumtree** ([www.gumtree.com.au](http://www.gumtree.com.au)).

### PRIVATE ADS

Buying privately can be time-consuming, and you'll have to travel around to assess your options. But you should expect a lower price than that charged by a licensed dealer. The seller should provide you with a roadworthy certificate (if required in the state you're in), but you won't get a cooling-off period or a statutory warranty.

It's your responsibility to ensure the car isn't stolen and that there's no money owing on it: check the car's details with the **Personal Property Securities Register** (☎1300 007 777; [www.ppsr.gov.au](http://www.ppsr.gov.au)).

Hostel noticeboards and the Thorn Tree travel forum at [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com) are good places to find vehicles for sale. Tour desks also often have noticeboards.

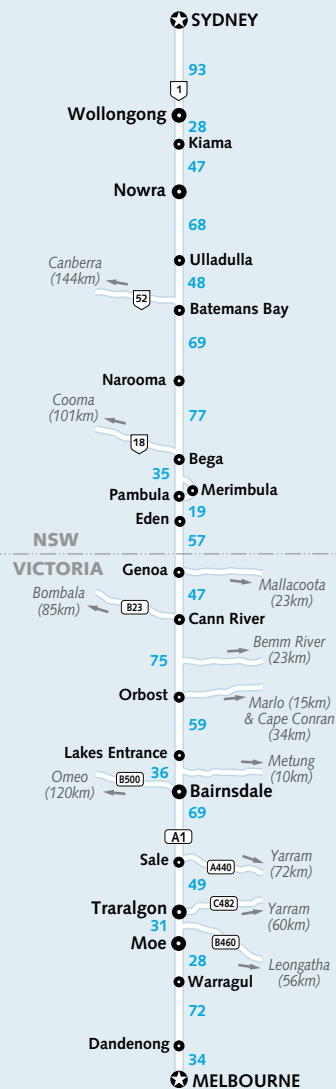
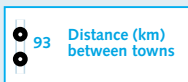
### DEALERS

Licensed car dealers are obliged to guarantee that no money is owing on the car. Depending on the age of the car and the kilometres travelled, you may also receive a statutory warranty. You will need to sign an agreement for sale; make sure you understand what it says before you sign. Some dealers will sell you a car with an undertaking to buy it back at an agreed price, but don't accept verbal guarantees – get it in writing.



## Sydney to Melbourne via the Princes Hwy

Total Distance = 1041km



### TRAVELLERS' MARKETS

Cairns, Sydney, Darwin and Perth (cities where travellers commonly begin or finish their travels) are the best places to buy or sell a vehicle, especially Cairns. It's possible these cars have been around Australia several times, so it can be a risky option.

**Sydney Travellers Car Market** ☎02-9331 4361; [www.sydneytravellerscarmarket.com.au](http://www.sydneytravellerscarmarket.com.au); Level 2, Kings Cross Car Park, Ward Ave, Kings Cross; ☀10am-4.30pm Mon-Sun; 🚗Kings Cross

### PAPERWORK

**Registration** When you buy a vehicle in Australia, you need to transfer the registration into your own name within 14 days. Each state has slightly different requirements and different organisations that do this. Similarly, when selling a vehicle you need to advise the state or territory road-transport authority of the sale and change of name. In NSW, Northern Territory (NT), Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria and WA, the buyer and seller need to complete and sign a Transfer of Registration form. In the ACT and SA there is no form, but the buyer and seller need to complete and sign the reverse of the registration certificate.

**Roadworthy certificate** If the vehicle you're considering doesn't have a roadworthy certificate, it's worth having a roadworthiness check done before you buy it. This can cost upwards of \$100 but can save you money on hidden costs. Road-transport authorities have lists of licensed vehicle testers. Sellers are required to provide a roadworthy certificate when transferring registration in the following situations:

- ACT – once the vehicle is six years old
- NSW – once the vehicle is five years old
- NT – once the vehicle is three years old
- Queensland – Safety Certificate required for all vehicles
- Victoria – Certificate of Roadworthiness required for all vehicles
- WA, SA and Tasmania – no inspections/certificates required in most circumstances

**Gas certificate** In Queensland, if a vehicle runs on gas, a gas certificate must be provided by the seller in order to transfer the registration. In the ACT, vehicles running on gas require an annual inspection.

**Immobiliser fitting** In WA it's compulsory to have an approved immobiliser fitted to most vehicles (not motorcycles) before transfer of registration; this is the buyer's responsibility.

**Changing state of registration** Note that registering a vehicle in a different state to the one it was previously registered in can be difficult, time-consuming and expensive.

**Renewing registration** Registration is paid annually Australia-wide, but most states/territories also give

you the option of renewing it for six and sometimes three months.

## ROAD TRANSPORT AUTHORITIES

For more information about processes and costs:

**Department of Planning, Transport & Infrastructure** (☎1300 872 677; [www.dpti.sa.gov.au](http://www.dpti.sa.gov.au)) SA.

**Department of State Growth – Transport** (☎1300 851 225; [www.transport.tas.gov.au](http://www.transport.tas.gov.au)) Tasmania.

**Department of Transport** (☎1300 654 628; [www.transport.nt.gov.au](http://www.transport.nt.gov.au)) NT.

**Department of Transport** (☎13 11 56; [www.transport.wa.gov.au](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au)) WA.

**Department of Transport & Main Roads** (☎13 23 80; [www.tmr.qld.gov.au](http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au)) Queensland.

**Roads & Maritime Services** (☎13 22 13; [www.rta.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au)) NSW.

**Road Transport Authority** (☎13 22 81; [www.rego.act.gov](http://www.rego.act.gov)) ACT.

**VicRoads** (☎13 11 71; [www.vicroads.vic.gov.au](http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au)) Victoria.

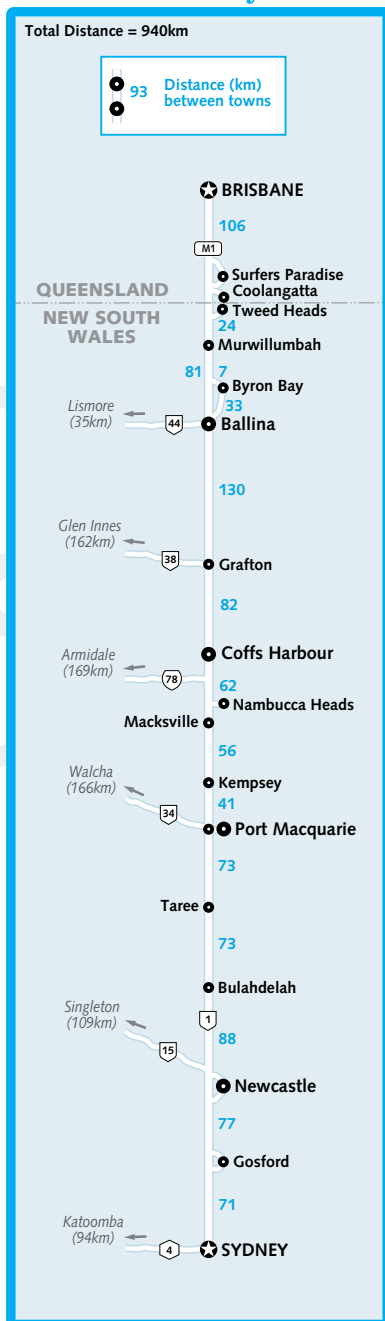
## Renting a Vehicle

Larger car-rental companies have drop-offs in major cities and towns. Most companies require drivers to be over the age of 21, though in some cases it's 18 and in others 25.

Suggestions to assist in the process:

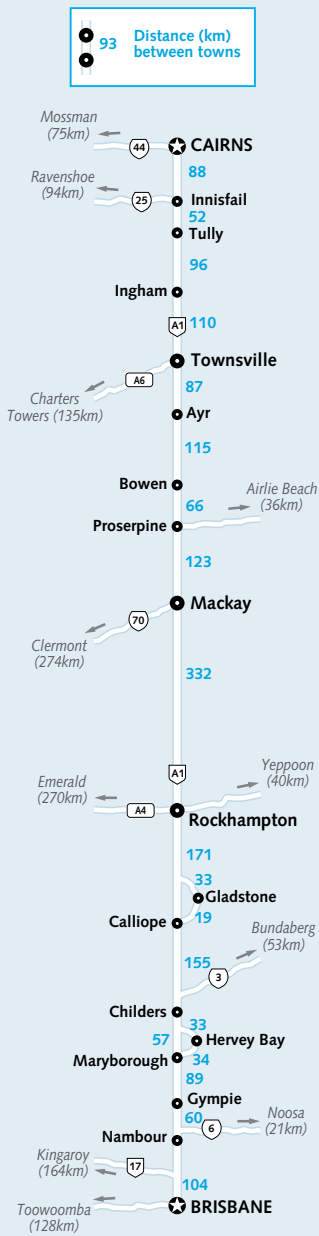
- ➔ Read the contract cover to cover.
- ➔ Bond: some companies may require a signed credit-card slip, others may actually charge your credit card; if this is the case, find out when you'll get a refund.
- ➔ Ask if unlimited kilometres are included and, if not, what the extra charge per kilometre is.
- ➔ Find out what excess you'll have to pay if you have a crash, and if it can be lowered by an extra charge per day (this option will usually be offered to you whether you ask or not). Check if your personal travel insurance covers you for vehicle accidents and excess.
- ➔ Check for exclusions (hitting a kangaroo, damage on unsealed roads etc) and whether you're covered on unavoidable unsealed roads (eg accessing camp sites). Some companies also exclude parts of the car from cover, such as the underbelly, tyres and windscreen.
- ➔ At pick-up inspect the vehicle for any damage. Make a note of anything on the contract before you sign.
- ➔ Ask about breakdown and accident procedures.
- ➔ If you can, return the vehicle during business hours and insist on an inspection in your presence.

## Sydney to Brisbane via the Pacific Hwy



## Brisbane to Cairns via the Bruce Hwy

Total Distance = 1705km



The usual big international companies all operate in Australia (Avis, Budget, Europcar, Hertz, Thrifty). The following websites offer last-minute discounts and give you the opportunity to compare rates between the big operators:

**Carehire** ([www.carhire.com.au](http://www.carhire.com.au))

**Drive Now** ([www.drivenow.com.au](http://www.drivenow.com.au))

**Webjet** ([www.webjet.com.au](http://www.webjet.com.au))

### 4WDs

Having a 4WD is essential for off-the-beaten-track driving into the outback. The major car-hire companies have 4WDs.

Renting a 4WD is affordable if a few people get together: something like a Nissan X-Trail (which can get you through most, but not all, tracks) costs around \$100 to \$150 per day; for a Toyota Landcruiser you're looking at around \$150 up to \$200, which should include unlimited kilometres.

Check the insurance conditions, especially the excess (which can be up to \$5000), as they can be onerous and policies might not cover damage caused when travelling off-road. A refundable bond is also often required – this can be as much as \$7500.

### CAMPERVANS

Companies for campervan hire – with rates from around \$90 (two berths) or \$150 (four berths) per day, usually with minimum five-day hire and unlimited kilometres – include the following:

**Apollo** (☎1800 777 779; [www.apollocamper.com](http://www.apollocamper.com), [www.hippiecamper.com](http://www.hippiecamper.com)) Also has a backpacker-focused brand called Hippie Camper.

**Britz** (☎1300 738 087; [www.britz.com.au](http://www.britz.com.au))

**Jucy Rentals** (☎1800 150 850; [www.jucy.com.au](http://www.jucy.com.au))

**Maui** (1300 363 800; [www.maui.com.au](http://www.maui.com.au))

**Mighty Cars & Campers** (☎1800 670 232; [www.mightycampers.com](http://www.mightycampers.com))

**Spaceships Campervans** (☎1300 132 469; [www.spaceshipsrentals.com.au](http://www.spaceshipsrentals.com.au))

**Travelwheels** (☎1800 289 222; [www.travelwheels.com.au](http://www.travelwheels.com.au))

### ONE-WAY RELOCATIONS

Relocations are usually cheap deals, although they don't allow much time flexibility. Most of the large hire companies offer deals, or try the following operators. See also [www.hippiecamper.com](http://www.hippiecamper.com) and [www.drivenow.com.au](http://www.drivenow.com.au).

**imoova** (☎1300 789 059; [www.imoova.com](http://www.imoova.com))

**Relocations2Go** (☎1800 735 627; [www.relocations2go.com](http://www.relocations2go.com))

**Transfercar** (☎02-8011 1870; [www.transfercar.com.au](http://www.transfercar.com.au))

## ROAD DISTANCES (KM)

Albany	2649										Cradle Mountain	383																												
Alice Springs	1512	3573			Devonport	283		100			Hobart	186		296		334																								
Birdsville	1183	3244		1176		Launceston	178		205		105		209		Queenstown	443		69		168		257		273																
Brisbane	1942				4178		1849		1573		Bicheno	Cradle Mountain		Devonport	Hobart		Launceston																							
Broome	4043		2865		2571		3564		5065																															
Cairns	3079		5601		2396		1919		1705		4111																													
Canberra	1372		4021		2725		2038		1287		5296		2923																											
Cape York	4444		6566		3361		2884		2601		5076		965		3888																									
Darwin	3006		5067		1494		2273		3774		1844		2820		3948		3785																							
Kalgoorlie	2168		885		3092		2763		3697		3052		5234		3540		6199		4896																					
Melbourne	728		3377		2240		1911		1860		4811		3496		637		4461		3734		2896																			
Perth	2624		411		3548		3219		4153		2454		6565		3996		7530		4298		598		3352																	
Sydney	1597		4246		3109		2007		940		5208		2634		289		3599		3917		3765		862		3869															
Townsville	3237		5374		2055		1578		1295		3770		341		2582		1306		2479		4893		3155		5349		2293													
Uluru	1559		3620		441		1617		2290		3012		2837		2931		3802		1935		3139		2287		3595		2804		2496											

These are the shortest distances by road; other routes may be considerably longer. For distances by coach, check the companies' leaflets.

## Insurance

**Third-party insurance** With the exception of NSW and Queensland, third-party personal-injury insurance is included in the vehicle-registration cost, ensuring that every registered vehicle carries at least minimum insurance (if registering in NSW or Queensland you'll need to arrange this privately). We recommend extending that minimum to at least third-party property insurance – minor collisions can be amazingly expensive.

**Rental vehicles** When it comes to hire cars, understand your liability in the event of an accident. Rather than risk paying out thousands of dollars, consider taking out comprehensive car insurance or paying an additional daily amount to the rental company for excess reduction (this reduces the excess payable in the event of an accident from between \$2000 and \$5000 to a few hundred dollars).

**Exclusions** Be aware that if travelling on dirt roads you usually will not be covered by insurance

unless you have a 4WD (read the fine print). Also, many companies' insurance won't cover the cost of damage to glass (including the windscreen) or tyres.

## Auto Clubs

Under the auspices of the **Australian Automobile Association** (☎02-6247 7311; www.aaa.asn.au) are automobile clubs in each state, handy when it comes to insurance, regulations, maps and roadside assistance. Club membership (around \$100 to \$150) can save you a lot of trouble if things go wrong mechanically. If you're a member of an auto club in your home country, check if reciprocal rights are offered in Australia. The major Australian auto clubs generally offer reciprocal rights in other states and territories.

**AANT** (Automobile Association of the Northern Territory; ☎13 11 11; www.aant.com.au) NT.

**NRMA** (National Roads & Motorists' Association; ☎13 11

22; www.mynrma.com.au) NSW and the ACT.

**RAC** (Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia; ☎13 17 03; www.rac.com.au) WA.

**RACQ** (Royal Automobile Club of Queensland; ☎13 19 05; www.racq.com.au) Queensland.

**RACT** (Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania; ☎13 27 22; www.ract.com.au) Tasmania.

**RACV** (Royal Automobile Club of Victoria; ☎13 72 28; www.racv.com.au) Victoria.

## Road Rules

Australians drive on the left-hand side of the road and all cars are right-hand drive.

**Give way** An important road rule is 'give way to the right' – if an intersection is unmarked (unusual) and at roundabouts, you must give way to vehicles entering the intersection from your right.

**Speed limits** The general speed limit in built-up and residential areas is 50km/h. Near schools, the limit is usually 25km/h

(sometimes 40km/h) in the morning and afternoon. On the highway it's usually 100km/h or 110km/h; in the NT it's either 110km/h or 130km/h. Police have speed radar guns and cameras and are fond of using them in strategic locations.

**Seatbelts and car seats** It's the law to wear seatbelts in the front and back seats; you're likely to get a fine if you don't. Small children must be belted into an approved safety seat.

**Drink-driving** Random breath-tests are common. If you're caught with a blood-alcohol level of more than 0.05%, expect a fine and the loss of your licence. Police can randomly pull any driver over for a breathalyser or drug test.

**Mobile phones** Using a mobile phone while driving is illegal in Australia (excluding hands-free technology).

## Hazards & Precautions

### BEHIND THE WHEEL

**Fatigue** Be wary of driver fatigue; driving long distances (particularly in hot weather) can be utterly exhausting. Falling asleep at the wheel is not uncommon. On a long haul, stop and rest every two hours or so; do some exercise, change drivers or have a coffee.

**Road trains** Be careful overtaking road trains (trucks with two or three trailers stretching for as long as 50m); you'll need distance and plenty of speed. On single-lane roads get right off the road when one approaches.

**Unsealed roads** Unsealed road conditions vary wildly and cars perform differently when braking and turning on dirt. Don't exceed 80km/h on dirt roads; if you go faster you won't have time to respond to a sharp turn, stock on the road or an unmarked gate or cattle grid.

### ANIMAL HAZARDS

➔ Roadkill is a huge problem in Australia, particularly in the NT, Queensland, NSW, SA and Tasmania. Many Australians avoid

travelling once the sun drops because of the risks posed by nocturnal animals on the roads.

➔ Kangaroos are common on country roads, as are cows and sheep in the unfenced outback. Kangaroos are most active around dawn and dusk and often travel in groups: if you see one hopping across the road, slow right down, as its friends may be just behind it.

➔ If you hit and kill an animal while driving, pull it off the road, preventing the next car from having a potential accident. If the animal is only injured and is small, perhaps an orphaned joey (baby kangaroo), wrap it in a towel or blanket and call the relevant wildlife rescue line:

**Department of Environment & Heritage Protection** (☎1300 264 625; [www.ehp.qld.gov.au](http://www.ehp.qld.gov.au)) Queensland.

**Department of Parks & Wildlife** (Wildcare Helpline ☎08-9474 9055; [www.parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au](http://www.parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au)) WA.

**Fauna Rescue of South Australia** (☎08-7226 0017; [www.faunarescue.org.au](http://www.faunarescue.org.au))

**NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue & Education Service** (WIRES; ☎1300 094 737; [www.wires.org.au](http://www.wires.org.au))

**Parks & Wildlife Service** (☎01300 827 727, after hours ☎03-6165 4305; [www.parks.tas.gov.au](http://www.parks.tas.gov.au)) Tasmania.

**Wildcare Inc NT** (☎0408 885 341, 08-8988 6121; [www.wildcare.nt.org.au](http://www.wildcare.nt.org.au))

**Wildlife Victoria** (☎1300 094 535; [www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au](http://www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au))

## Fuel

**Fuel types** Unleaded and diesel fuel is available from service stations sporting well-known international brand names. LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) is not always stocked at more remote roadhouses; if you're on gas it's safer to have dual-fuel capacity.

**Costs** Prices vary from place to place, but at the time of writing unleaded was hovering between

\$1.20 and \$1.50 in the cities. Out in the country, prices soar – in outback NT, SA, WA and Queensland you can pay as much as \$2.20 per litre.

**Availability** In cities and towns petrol stations proliferate, but distances between fill-ups can be long in the outback. That said, there are only a handful of tracks where you'll require a long-range fuel tank. On main roads there'll be a small town or roadhouse roughly every 150km to 200km. Many petrol stations, but not all, are open 24 hours.

## Resources

**Australian Bureau of Meteorology** ([www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au)) Weather information.

**Department of Planning, Transport & Infrastructure** (☎1300 361 033; [www.transport.sa.gov.au](http://www.transport.sa.gov.au)) SA road conditions.

**Green Vehicle Guide** ([www.greenvehicleguide.gov.au](http://www.greenvehicleguide.gov.au)) Rates Australian vehicles based on greenhouse and air-pollution emissions.

**Live Traffic NSW** (☎1300 131 122; [www.livetraffic.com](http://www.livetraffic.com)) NSW road conditions.

**Main Roads Western Australia** (☎13 81 38; [www.mainroads.wa.gov.au](http://www.mainroads.wa.gov.au)) WA road conditions.

**Motorcycle Council of NSW** (☎1300 679 622; [www.mccofnsw.org.au](http://www.mccofnsw.org.au)) One of many such organisations around Australia.

**Road Report** (☎1800 246 199; [www.roadreport.nt.gov.au](http://www.roadreport.nt.gov.au)) NT road conditions.

**Traffic & Travel Information** (☎13 19 40; [www.transport.sa.gov.au](http://www.transport.sa.gov.au)) Queensland road conditions.

## Hitching

Hitching is never entirely safe in any country in the world, and we don't recommend it. Travellers who decide to hitch should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk. People who do choose to hitch will be safer if they travel in pairs and let someone know where they are planning to go.

## Local Transport

All of Australia's major towns have reliable, affordable public bus networks, and there are suburban train lines in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. Melbourne also has trams (Adelaide has one!), and Sydney has harbour ferries and a light-rail line. Taxis operate Australia-wide.

See regional chapters for detailed info.

## Tours

Backpacker-style and more formal bus tours offer a convenient way to get from A to B and see the sights on the way. Following are some multistate operators; see regional chapters for smaller companies operating within individual states and territories.

**AAT Kings** (☎1300 228 546; www.aatkings.com) Big coach company (popular with the older set) with myriad tours all around Australia.

**Adventure Tours Australia** (☎1300 654 604; www.adventuretours.com.au) Affordable, young-at-heart tours in all states.

**Autopia Tours** (☎03-9397 7758; www.autopiatours.com.au) One- to three-day trips from Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney.

**Groovy Grape Tours** (☎1800 661 177; www.groovygrape.com.au) Small-group, SA-based operator running one-day to one-week tours ex-Adelaide, Melbourne and Alice Springs.

**Nullarbor Traveller** (☎1800 816 858; www.thetraveller.net.au) Small company running relaxed minibus trips across the Nullarbor Plain between SA and WA.

**Oz Experience** (☎1300 300 028; www.ozexperience.com) Backpacker tour covering central,

northern and eastern Australia in a U-shaped route – Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Alice Springs and Darwin – utilising Greyhound bus services.

## Train

Long-distance rail travel in Australia is something you do because you really want to – not because it's cheap, convenient or fast. That said, trains are more comfortable than buses, and there is a certain long-distance 'romance of the rails' that's alive and kicking. Shorter-distance rail services within most states are run by state rail bodies, either government or private.

The three major interstate services in Australia are operated by **Great Southern Rail** (☎13 21 47; www.greatsouthernrail.com.au), namely the Indian Pacific between Sydney and Perth, the Overland between Melbourne and Adelaide, and the Ghan between Adelaide and Darwin via Alice Springs. There's also the new high-speed Spirit of Queensland service between Brisbane and Cairns, operated by **Queensland Rail** (☎13 16 17; www.queenslandrail.com.au). Trains from Sydney to Brisbane, Melbourne and Canberra are operated by **NSW TrainLink** (☎13 22 32; www.nswtrainlink.info). Within Victoria, **V/Line** (www.vline.com.au) runs trains, linking up with buses for connections into NSW, SA and the ACT.

## Costs

Following are standard online one-way fares booked in advance. Backpacker discounts are also available.

**Adelaide–Darwin** Adult/child seated from \$929/433; cabin from \$1709/1489.

**Adelaide–Melbourne** Adult/child seated from \$139/71.

**Adelaide–Perth** Adult/child seated from \$589/273; cabin from \$1349/1161.

**Brisbane–Cairns** Adult/child seated from \$269/135; cabin from \$519/311.

**Sydney–Canberra** Adult/child seated from \$57/28.

**Sydney–Brisbane** Adult/child seated from \$91/65; cabin from \$216/179.

**Sydney–Melbourne** Adult/child seated from \$91/65; cabin from \$216/179.

**Sydney–Perth** Adult/child seated from \$939/438; cabin from \$1929/1689.

## Train Passes

Queensland Rail offers the **Queensland Coastal Pass** allowing unlimited stopovers one way between Cairns and Brisbane in either direction. A one-month Coastal Pass costs \$209; two months is \$289. The **Queensland Explorer Pass** is similar but extends over the entire state rail network. A one-month Explorer Pass costs \$299; two months is \$389.

Great Southern Rail offers international visitors the **Rail Explorer Pass**, costing \$545/655 per person for three/six months. Travel is on the Ghan, the Overland and the Indian Pacific (seated, not in cabins).

NSW TrainLink has the **Discovery Pass** for both international visitors and Australians, allowing unlimited one-way economy travel around NSW, plus connections to Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Melbourne and Canberra. A 14-day/one-/three-/six-month pass costs \$232/275/298/420; premium-class upgrades are available.

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