



AUSTRALIA

TOP SIGHTS, AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

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Welcome to Australia

Australia is a wildly beautiful land, a vivid collusion of red outback sands, golden beaches and brightly coloured reefs – all of which set the stage for sophisticated urban indulgences and soulful Indigenous encounters.

Most Australians live along the coast, and most of these folks live in cities. It follows that urban life here is a lot of fun! Sydney is the glamorous poster child with world-class beaches and a glorious harbour. Melbourne is all arts, alleyways and stellar food. Brisbane is a subtropical town on the way up; Adelaide has festive grace and pubby poise. Boom-town Perth breathes West Coast optimism and Canberra showcases the nation's cultural treasures. Darwin, on the tropical northern frontier, and the chilly southern sandstone city of Hobart couldn't be more different.

Australia's landscapes are just as diverse, from lush tropical and temperate rainforests to the remote rocky outcrops of Uluru, Kakadu and the Kimberley. Beset with islands and deserted shores, Australia's coastline is wild and wonderful. Animating these splendid places is wildlife like nowhere else on the planet: kangaroos, crocodiles, wombats, wallabies, platypus, crocodiles, dingoes and 700-plus bird species.

Hungry yet? Australia plates up a multicultural fusion of European techniques and fresh Pacific-rim ingredients – aka 'Mod Oz' (Modern Australian). Seafood plays a starring role, though you'll always find beef, lamb and chicken at Aussie barbecues. To wash all it down, Australian beers, wines and whiskies are world-beaters.

“ Beset with islands and deserted shores, Australia's coastline is wild and wonderful. ”



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Plan Your Trip

Australia's Top 12



Sydney

Australia's iconic city is beachy and beautiful

The big-ticket sights in Sydney (p35) – the Sydney Opera House, the Rocks and Sydney Harbour Bridge – top most people's lists. But to really catch Sydney's vibe, spend a day at the beach. Stake out some sand at Bondi Beach and plunge into the surf; or hop on a harbour ferry to Manly for a swim, a surf or a walk along the sea-sprayed promenade to Shelly Beach. *Ahhh*, this is the life!

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Great Ocean Road

A classic Australian road trip

The Twelve Apostles – craggy rock formations jutting out of wild waters – are one of Victoria’s most vivid sights, but it’s the ‘getting there’ journey along the Great Ocean Road (p167) that doubles their impact. Drive slowly along roads that curl beside spectacular Bass Strait beaches and holiday villages, then whip inland through temperate rainforest studded with small towns and big trees.

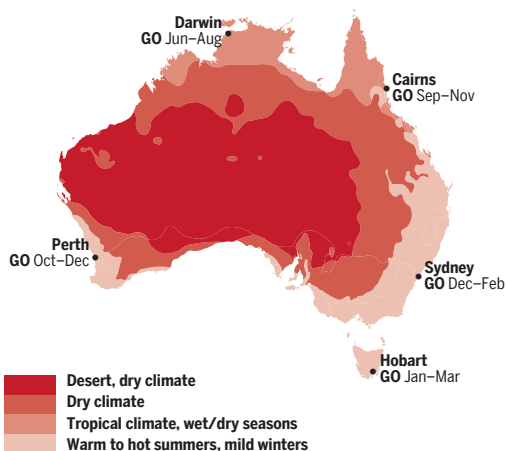
Twelve Apostles (p170)

Plan Your Trip

Need to Know



When to Go



High Season (Dec–Feb)

- Summertime: local holidays, busy beaches.
- Prices rise 25% for big-city accommodation.
- Outdoor concerts, film screenings and food festivals.

Shoulder (Mar–May & Sep–Nov)

- Warm sun, clear skies, shorter queues.
- Easter is busy with travelling Aussie families.
- Atmospheric autumn leaves in southeastern states.

Low Season (Jun–Aug)

- Cool and rainy down south; mild and sunny up north.
- Low tourist numbers; attractions keep shorter hours.
- Head for the desert, the tropical north or the snow.

Currency

Australian dollar (\$)

Language

English

Visas

All visitors to Australia need a visa, except New Zealanders. Apply online for an ETA or eVisitor visa, each allowing a three-month stay: www.border.gov.au.

Money

ATMs widely available in cities and larger towns. Credit cards accepted for hotels, restaurants, transport and activity bookings.

Mobile Phones

European phones work on Australia's network, but not most North American or Japanese phones. Use global roaming or a local SIM card and a prepaid account.

Time

Australia has three main time zones: Australian Eastern, Central and Western Standard Time. Sydney is on AEST, which is GMT/UCT plus 10 hours.