

# Best of Australia

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## Great Barrier Reef

Unesco World Heritage listed? Check. Oprah Winfrey endorsed? Check. The Great Barrier Reef (p111) is as fragile as it is beautiful. Stretching more than 2000km along the Queensland coastline, it's a complex ecosystem populated with dazzling coral, languid sea turtles, gliding rays, timid reef sharks and tropical fish of every colour and size. Whether you dive down to it, snorkel over it or explore it via scenic flight or glass-bottomed boat, this vivid undersea kingdom and its coral-fringed islands is unforgettable.

4



## The Whitsundays

You can hop around a whole stack of tropical islands in this seafaring life and never find anywhere with the sheer beauty of the Whitsundays (p129). Travellers of all monetary persuasions launch yachts from party-town Airlie Beach or from sprawling Hamilton Island and drift between these lush green isles in a slow search for paradise (you'll probably find it in more than one place). Don't miss Whitehaven Beach – one of Australia's best. Wish you were here?

Whitehaven Beach (p153)

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# Plan Your Trip

## Ten-Day Itinerary



TANVAYANI PHOTOGRAPHY / GETTY IMAGES ©

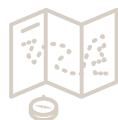
## Island Times & Rainforest Retreats

*Tropical and subtropical Queensland form a vast playground of dense rainforests, uninhabited islands, perfect beaches and, of course, the world's largest coral reef. In 10 days, you can have your fill of all these wonders, yet never feel especially rushed.*

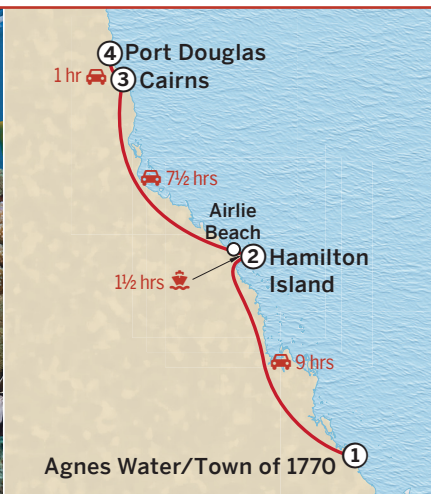
### 1 Agnes Water & Town of 1770 (p122)

Distances here are significant; this itinerary includes two long road trips but flights are also possible. Start your tour in the delightful twin towns of **Agnes Water & Town of 1770**, five hours' drive north of Brisbane. Explore the laid-back streets, grab lunch at **Getaway Garden Café**, then spend the afternoon kayaking with **1770 Liquid Adventures**. Day two is all about the reef. **Lady Musgrave Cruises** leaves from 1770, spending five hours on Lady Musgrave Island and skimming over the coral in a semisubmersible.

➔ Agnes Water & Town of 1770 to Hamilton Island  
 🚗 9 hrs then 🚤 1½ hrs



From left: Whitehaven Beach (p135), the Whitsundays; green turtle, Great Barrier Reef (p111)



JEFF HUNTER / GETTY IMAGES ©

## 2 Hamilton Island & the Whitsundays (p129)

Day three is a road trip – it's more than 700km to Shute Harbour plus just over an hour by ferry to **Hamilton Island**, the major jumping-off point in the Whitsundays and a good place to base yourself. The next morning, head to the marina to take your pre-booked place on the superfast **Camira** catamaran as it loops around **Whitsunday Island**, stopping at the unparalleled Whitehaven and Chalkies Beaches for frolics, snorkelling and lunch.

On day five explore **Long Island**: get acquainted with the local rock wallabies, and luxuriate in the classic Whitsunday landscape. Then on day six **Cruise Whitsundays** can ferry you to **Airlie Beach**, the area's major mainland centre, to pick up a cruise to the southern reef. Stay in Airlie overnight, getting plenty of sleep for the drive tomorrow.

➔ **Airlie Beach to Cairns**  
 🚗 7½ hrs

## 3 Cairns (p124)

Day seven heralds the 620km drive to **Cairns** – you'll want to just relax when you get there, so a dip in the swimming lagoon and dinner at **Tokyo Dumpling** will be the answer. The next day it's either diving or snorkelling in the inner reef gardens, or on the outer reef.

➔ **Cairns to Port Douglas**  
 🚗 1 hr

## 4 Port Douglas (p148)

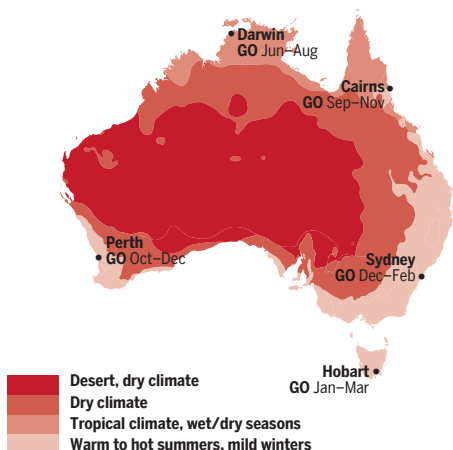
Head north on day nine to **Port Douglas**, your base for the next two days. Spend the first getting to know this tropical haven, lazing on **Four Mile Beach** and perhaps enjoying some fine dining and theatre at **Flames of the Forest**. On your last morning, let **Tony's Tropical Tours** collect you for a day of river cruising, four-wheel driving and walking through the most gorgeous sections of the Unesco-protected **Daintree Rainforest**.

# Plan Your Trip

## Need to Know



### When to Go



### High Season (Dec–Feb)

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

### Shoulder (Mar–May & Sep–Nov)

- Warm sun, clear skies, shorter queues.
- Easter (late March or early April) is busy with Aussie families on the loose.
- Autumn leaves are atmospheric in Victoria and Tassie.

### Low Season (Jun–Aug)

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

### Currency

Australian dollars (\$)

### Language

English

### Visas

All visitors to Australia need a visa, except New Zealanders. Apply online for an ETA or eVisitor visa.

### Money

ATMs widely available. Credit cards accepted in most hotels and restaurants.

### Mobile Phones

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

### Time

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

## Daily Costs

### Budget Less than \$100

- Dorm bed: \$25–35
- Double room in a hostel: from \$80
- Simple pizza or pasta meal: \$10–15
- Short public-transport bus or tram ride: \$4

### Midrange \$100–280

- Double room in a midrange hotel/motel: \$100–200
- Breakfast or lunch in a cafe: \$20–40
- Short taxi ride: \$25
- Car hire per day: from \$35

### Top end More than \$280

- Double room in a top-end hotel: from \$200
- Three-course meal in a high-end restaurant: from \$80
- Nightclub cover charge: \$10–20
- Domestic flight Sydney to Melbourne: from \$100

## Websites

**Exchange Rates** ([www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com)) Current exchange rates.

**Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com/australia](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/australia)) Destination information, hotel bookings, traveller forum and more.

**Tourism Australia** ([www.australia.com](http://www.australia.com)) Main government tourism site with visitor info.

**Bureau of Meteorology** ([www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au)) Nationwide weather forecasts.

**The Australian** ([www.theaustralian.com.au](http://www.theaustralian.com.au)) National broadsheet newspaper online.

**Parks Australia** ([www.environment.gov.au/parks](http://www.environment.gov.au/parks)) Info on national parks and reserves.

**Coastalwatch** ([www.coastalwatch.com](http://www.coastalwatch.com)) Surf reports and surf-cams.

## Opening Hours

Opening hours vary from state to state, but use the following as a general guide.

**Banks** 9.30am to 4pm Monday to Thursday, until 5pm Friday.

**Bars** 4pm until late

**Cafes** 7am to 5pm

**Pubs** 11am to midnight

**Restaurants** noon to 2.30pm, 6pm to 9pm

**Shops** 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, until noon or 5pm Saturday

**Supermarkets** 7am to 8pm; some 24 hours.

## Arriving in Australia

**Sydney Airport** (p80) Airport Link trains run to the city centre every 10 minutes from around 5am to 1am (20 minutes). Pre-booked shuttle buses service city hotels. A taxi into the city costs \$45 to \$55 (30 minutes).

**Melbourne Airport** (p188) SkyBus services (24-hour) run to the city (25 minutes), leaving every 10 to 30 minutes. A taxi into the city costs around \$65 (25 minutes).

## Getting Around

Australia is the sixth-largest country in the world: how you get from A to B requires some thought.

**Car** Travel at your own tempo, explore remote areas and visit regions with no public transport. Hire cars in major towns; drive on the left.

**Plane** Fast-track your holiday with affordable, frequent, fast flights between major centres. Carbon offset your flights if you're feeling guilty.

**Bus** Reliable, frequent long-haul services around the country. Not always cheaper than flying.

**Train** Slow, expensive and infrequent...but the scenery is great!







## Our Story

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London, Oakland, Franklin, Delhi and Beijing, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## Our Writers



### Hugh McNaughtan

A former English lecturer and food writer, Hugh moved to the UK with his young family in 2013, and took up travel writing full time. He's written (and eaten) his way through Maluku, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Britain, but still has a soft spot for the fabulous food of his home town, Melbourne.

### Kate Armstrong

Kate is a Victorian, but for years has enjoyed migrating northwards for the warmth and laid-back attitudes of sunny Queensland. With more than 30 overseas LP titles to her name, Kate also finally enjoyed getting her car dirty in her own backyard. See more adventures at [www.katearmstrong.com.au](http://www.katearmstrong.com.au) and @nomaditis.

### Brett Atkinson

Brett is based in Auckland, New Zealand and has covered around 50 countries as a guidebook author and travel and food writer. See [www.brett-atkinson.net](http://www.brett-atkinson.net) for his most recent work and upcoming travels.

### Carolyn Bain

On a recent Lonely Planet research trip Carolyn covered 6500km of glorious NSW scenery under big blue skies, from the scorching sands of Mungo to the vineyards of Mudgee. The outback's 40°C temps made a change from her usual travel-writing stomping grounds of Iceland and Denmark. Read more at [carolynbain.com.au](http://carolynbain.com.au).

### Celeste Brash

Celeste has contributed to around 50 Lonely Planet guidebooks and her award-winning writing has appeared in publications from *BBC Travel* to National Geographic's *Intelligent Traveller*. After 15 years in the South Pacific she now lives with her husband and two children in Portland, Oregon.

## More Writers

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