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New South Wales

Sometimes reserved, more often outrageously outgoing, but always welcoming, New South Wales (NSW) is endlessly fascinating. The country's most populous state and the birthplace of the modern nation, it's a state rich in history (both Aboriginal and European), geography and contrasts. And of course it's home to stunning Sydney, the nation's capital in all but name.

Diversity reigns supreme here. South of the enchanting harbour, languid coastal towns hug the rugged coastline and deliver increasingly deserted and beautiful beaches. Still further south the Snowy Mountains lure ski bunnies in winter and ramblers in summer. Towns founded by gold miners and graziers pepper the heart of the state, and to the far west the arid lunar landscape of the outback beckons and beguiles. In the north, the classic Aussie surf culture dominates and alternative hinterland lifestyles rub shoulders with million-dollar beach houses. And in almost every corner you'll find incredible national parks to explore: some World Heritage listed and some that look like they should be.

NSW has something to offer every traveller. Gastronomes love Sydney's world-class restaurants and the Hunter Valley's award-winning wines; adrenalin junkies get their kicks canyoning, skiing, surfing, bushwalking, cycling, diving and whale watching. Backpackers live it up in campervans barrelling along the east coast, and culture buffs devour the many museums, galleries and ancient Indigenous sites that are woven into the magnificent landscape.

But wherever you choose to travel you can be certain of two things: the road is always easy and the welcome is always warm.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Fall in love with **Sydney** (p98) and her heartbreaking harbour
- Be inspired by the dramatic scenery and empty spaces of **Broken Hill** (p259)
- Hire a houseboat and wind your way along the twisting, tapering, magical **Hawkesbury River** (p151)
- Dip your toes in the pure white sand and sapphire waters of **Jervis Bay** (p233)
- Discover boutique wineries among the jacaranda-lined lanes of **Wollombi** (p172) and the vineyards of the **Lower Hunter Valley** (p168)
- Make a beeline for the beautiful beaches, terrific surf and laid-back organic lifestyle of **Byron Bay** (p195)
- Meet the enchanting Three Sisters in the spectacular **Blue Mountains** (p153)
- Ski, snowboard, bushwalk and camp the lofty heights of **Kosciuszko National Park** (p242)

★ Byron Bay
★ Broken Hill
Lower Hunter Valley ★
Hawkesbury River ★
Blue Mountains ★ ★ Sydney
★ Jervis Bay
Kosciuszko ★
National Park

■ TELEPHONE CODE: 02	■ POPULATION: 6.9 MILLION	■ AREA: 900,628 SQ KM

HISTORY

On 19 April 1770 Lieutenant (later Captain) James Cook of the British Navy climbed onto the deck of his ship *Endeavour* and spied land. Ten days later he dropped anchor at Botany Bay and declared the area New South Wales. His arrival caused much alarm to the Aboriginal people living in the area, for as Cook noted in his journal: 'All they seemed to want was for us to be gone.'

But in 1788 the British were back to stay. Under the command of naval Captain Arthur Phillip, the 'First Fleet' numbered 751 convicts and children and around 250 soldiers, officials and their wives. Upon arriving at Botany Bay, Phillip was rather disappointed by what he saw and ordered the ships to sail north, where he found 'the finest harbour in the world'. The date of the landing was 26 January, an occasion that is remembered each year (although not without some protest) with a public holiday known as Australia Day.

Early days of settlement were difficult and famine threatened the population in 1790, but by the early 1800s Sydney was a bustling port. A space in the bush had been cleared for vegetable gardens, new houses, warehouses and streets – and windmills seemed to occupy the top of every hill. In 1793 Phillip returned to London, having done what had been asked of him, but his plans to create a vigorous new society in Australia had begun to unravel owing to the self-serving military officers who had gained control of Government House. London was having none of it and in 1809 dispatched Governor Lachlan Macquarie to restore the rule of law, and under his guidance Sydney flourished.

By the 1830s the general layout of NSW was understood, and the Blue Mountains had been penetrated. In addition the Lachlan, Macquarie, Murrumbidgee and Darling river systems had been explored.

Over the next 60 or so years, the rapid expansion of the NSW economy resulted in good wages, social mobility and increasingly strong unions, all of which fed the belief that Australia might become 'the working man's paradise'. But employers were anxious to keep wage costs low, and the appeal of cheap Asian or Islander labour was irresistible. Immigration was encouraged, and against this background the popular Sydney magazine the *Bulletin* was founded in 1880 and ran until January 2008. Originally intended to be a journal of political and business commentary, the magazine quickly developed a strong nationalist, anti-imperialist and racist voice that championed a version of Australian nationalism that was working class, male, white and republican.

On 1 January 1901, NSW and the other colonies federated to form the nation of Australia, which remained part of the British Empire. In 1914, as citizens of the Empire, thousands of Australian men volunteered to fight in the Australian Imperial Force when WWI broke out. They did the same again during WWII, after which the Australian government embarked on a massive immigration program, attracting migrants from Britain and mainland Europe. These 'new Australians' had a huge impact on NSW, especially in the irrigation farms of the Riverina, in the building of the great Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme, in the large industrial centres and in Sydney itself. By the 1970s Australia had abolished its old policies of racial discrimination and declared itself to be a multicultural country.

Sydney is now a confident world city. In 2000 it welcomed the new millennium by hosting a spectacularly successful Olympic Games. But ugly race riots on Sydney's Cronulla Beach in 2005 laid bare the tensions between some old and new Australians. Overwhelmingly, however, the people of NSW are unerringly warm and open to travellers, and they maintain a profound and enduring culture of goodwill and good sense.

GEOGRAPHY & CLIMATE

NSW divides roughly into four regions: the coastal strip; the Great Dividing Range about 100km inland from the coast; the Blue Mountains west of Sydney; and the Snowy Mountains in the south.

West of the Great Dividing Range is farming country: dry western plains that cover two-thirds of the state. The plains fade into the barren outback in the far west, where summer temperatures can soar to over 40°C. The major rivers are the Murray and the Darling (which wanders westward across the plains). As a general rule, it gets hotter the further north you go and drier the further west. In winter the Snowy Mountains live up to their name.

Sydney has a temperate climate, rarely dropping below 10°C at night. Summer temperatures can hit 40°C, but the average summer maximum is 25°C. Winters often see substantial rain; bring an umbrella.