

# welcome to Australia



## Hip Cities

Most Australians live along the coast, and most of these folks live in cities. In fact, Australia is the 18th-most urbanised country in the world, with around 70% of Australians living in the 10 largest towns. It follows that cities here are a lot of fun! Sydney, the sun-kissed Harbour City, is a glamorous collusion of beaches, boutiques and bars. Melbourne is all arts, alleyways and Australian Rules football. Brisbane is a subtropical town on the way up; Adelaide has festive grace and pubby poise. Boom-town Perth breathes west-coast optimism; Canberra transcends political agendas. If you're looking for contrast, the tropical northern frontier town of Darwin and

chilly southern sandstone city of Hobart couldn't be more different. But whichever city you're wheeling into, you'll never go wanting for a decent coffee, live band, art-gallery opening or music festival mosh-pit.

## Food & Drink

Australia has broken the binds of its Anglo meat-and-two-veg culinary past, serving up a multicultural fusion of European techniques and fresh Pacific-rim ingredients. 'Mod Oz' (or Modern Australian) is what the locals call it. Seafood plays a starring role – 'Hardly surprising on an island this big!', we hear you say...but from succulent Moreton Bay Bugs to delicate King George Whiting, there's a lot of variety in



*Island, country, continent...  
Australia is a big'un  
whichever way you spin it.  
The essence of the place is  
diversity: deserts, coral reefs,  
tall forests, snow-cloaked  
mountains and multicultural  
melting-pot cities.*

(left) Pinnacles Desert (p962), Western Australia  
(below) Sydney Opera House (p68)



the ocean's bounty. And of course, beer in hand, you'll still find beef, lamb and chicken at traditional Aussie BBQs. Don't drink beer? Australian wines are world-beaters: punchy Barossa Valley reds, McLaren Vale Shiraz, Hunter Valley Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc from Tasmania's cool-climate Tamar Valley. Need a caffeine hit? Italian cafes have always known how to make the perfect espresso, but now there are coffee machines in pubs and petrol stations, and baristas in downtown coffee carts – you're never far from a double-shot, day or night.

## **It's A Wide Open Road**

There's a heckuva lot of tarmac across this wide brown land. From Margaret River to

Cooktown, Jabiru to Dover, the best way to really appreciate Australia is to hit the open road. Car hire here is relatively affordable, road conditions are generally good, and outside of the big cities there's buggin'-all traffic. If you're driving a campervan, you'll find well-appointed caravan parks in just about every town of any size. If you're feeling more adventurous, hire a 4WD and go off-road: Australia's national parks and secluded corners are custom-made for down-the-dirt-road camping trips. So embrace your inner road warrior and sing it loud: '*Get your motor runnin'... Head out on the highway...*'