



# Sydney & the Central Coast

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## Why Go?

Sydney is special. Its traditional owners, the Eora people, have always known this. In 1770 they watched Captain James Cook recognise their land's huge potential and covet it for Britain, and now they welcome nearly three million international visitors every year who seem to instantly and unanimously emulate Cook's positive assessment. The city's spectacular harbour setting, gorgeous climate and sophisticated sheen make it unique among the Australian states, and its fun-loving local population endows it with a confident charm that every city yearns for but few achieve.

It would seem reasonable to assume that the areas surrounding Sydney should be content to bask in the reflected and undeniably golden glow of their neighbour, but that's not the case. Destinations such as the Blue Mountains, Hunter Valley and Central Coast have more than enough accolades and attractions of their own, including pristine beaches, picture-perfect vineyards and magnificent mountain ranges.

## Best Places to Eat

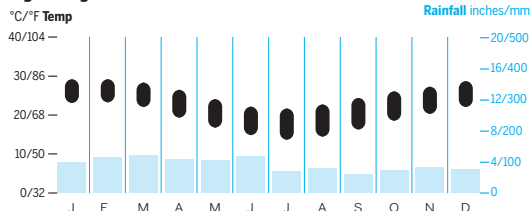
- » Icebergs Dining Room & Bar (p78)
- » Bécasse (p75)
- » Solitary (p101)
- » Marga (p112)
- » Bent on Food (p119)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Sydney Harbour YHA (p68)
- » Bondi Beach House (p73)
- » Tower Lodge (p111)

## When to Go

### Sydney



**January** The year kicks off with a spectacular fire-work display over Circular Quay.

**February** Summer's party season culminates with the decadent Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras.

**July** Wood fires, wine and winter menus are on offer at the Blue Mountains and Hunter Valley.

## Indigenous Culture

The Indigenous people of NSW have had a complex and mutually supportive relationship with the landscape for millennia and gaining an insight into their ancient heritage can be a highlight of any visit – to do so, book a place on an Aboriginal Heritage Tour of the Royal Botanic Gardens (p52), an Aboriginal Culture Tour around Sydney Harbour (p52) or a Blue Mountains Walkabout (p100).

For more information on the region's Aboriginal culture, see p65.

### AUSTRALIAN CONVICT SITES

The most recent Australian additions to the World Heritage List are 11 sites that are collectively known as the **Australian Convict Sites** ([www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/world/convict-sites](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/world/convict-sites)). Four of these sites are in or around Sydney: Old Government House and Domain in Parramatta; Hyde Park Barracks Museum in Sydney (p57). Cockatoo Island, at the junction of the Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers in Sydney; and the Old Great North Rd, which you can visit on your way to the Hunter Valley.

These sites are among many in Sydney and on the Central Coast dating back to early colonial times. In Sydney, many of them are maintained and opened to the public by the Historic Houses Trust – purchasing one of its 'Tickets through Time' (p49) gives discounted entry to the sites while at the same time supporting the trust's program of ongoing maintenance and interpretation. And not everything is in Sydney; Port Macquarie's main street has a number of convict-constructed buildings, making it a popular heritage promenade.

## Great Surfing Spots

- » Northern Beaches, Sydney (p64) – a 20km stretch of amazing urban surf
- » Bar and Merewether Beaches, Newcastle (p106 & p106) – world-famous beach breaks
- » Boomerang Beach, Pacific Palms (p118) – catch a wave with the local dolphins
- » Lighthouse Beach, Seal Rocks (p117) – epic waves when the south swell comes in
- » One Mile Beach, Anna Bay (p113) – for experienced and novice surfers alike
- » North Haven (p118) – magical rights on the breakwall

### TOP TIP

**MyMulti Public Transport Passes** ([www.myzone.nsw.gov.au](http://www.myzone.nsw.gov.au)) give unlimited travel on government buses and ferries, as well as on trains across much of the state.

## Fast Facts

- » Population 4.2 million
- » Area 800,642 sq km
- » Telephone Area Code 02
- » Number of patrolled surf beaches 405

## Planning Your Trip

- » Visit when regions hold annual festivals: Hunter Valley (p109) during June, the Blue Mountains (p97) in winter, and Newcastle's beaches (p103) in March.
- » Book accommodation well in advance, particularly for summer.
- » Fine dining restaurants are often fully booked on weekends and closed early in the week – call for reservations.

## Resources

- » Visit NSW ([www.visitnsw.com.au](http://www.visitnsw.com.au)) has information about Sydney and NSW.
- » Department of Environment, Climate Change & Water ([www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nationalparks](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/nationalparks)) provides information about NSW National Parks