



Understand East Coast Australia

EAST COAST AUSTRALIA TODAY486

Floods, fires, climate change and economic well-being are the major talking points all along the coast.

HISTORY489

Aborigines, convicts, explorers, gold-diggers, sheep shearers, soldiers and immigrants have all helped shape the Australian identity.

ENVIRONMENT.....498

Tim Flannery's portrait of ancient tropical rainforests, ever-changing underwater landscapes and the unusual wildlife that call these places home.

FOOD & WINE505

Top tips on the bountiful seafood, world-famous vineyards, venerable restaurants, microbreweries and farmers' markets all along the coast.

SPORT509

The love for sport here is boundless. Join Aussies on game day (just keep the barracking to a minimum).



population per sq km



East Coast Australia Today

Floods & Fires

The end of 2010 brought record rainfall to much of the East Coast, particularly NSW and Queensland. Farmers initially welcomed the announcement that the 10-year drought was over, then saw their crops waterlogged and destroyed. As the rains continued, things grew progressively worse, and by early 2011, flood waters had inundated dozens of towns, affecting 1 million sq km – roughly the size of France and Germany combined. Brisbane, Australia's third-largest city, suffered devastation on 11 January when the Brisbane River broke its banks and water levels reached above 4m, flooding vast stretches of the city.

When the waters finally subsided they left 35 people dead and over 30,000 homes and businesses destroyed or damaged. Australian Treasurer Wayne Swan described the floods as the 'most costly economic disaster in our history', costing the nation \$5.6 billion. Coal production, crop losses and a hit to tourism would all take their toll.

The south also suffered from flooding in early 2011, with more than 50 communities in western and central Victoria affected. Some 1700 properties were flooded, fields were inundated and thousands of livestock were lost – placing an economic cost to agriculture upwards of \$1.5 billion.

Victoria's floods followed roughly two years after an even worse natural disaster. The tragic bushfires of 7 February 2009 (dubbed 'Black Saturday') claimed 173 lives. Caused by a record-breaking heatwave, the fires destroyed some 4500 sq km and caused over \$1 billion in damage.

Reef or Madness

For many climatologists these events were just part of the growing evidence that the effects of human-induced climate change were wreaking havoc on weather patterns in Australia – among other places.

Top Films

Australia (2008) Baz Luhrmann's epic set against the backdrop of WWII and beautifully shot in NSW and Queensland.

Ned Kelly (2003) An entertaining portrait of the legendary bushranger.

The Castle (1997) Hilarious comedy that gleefully plays with Aussie stereotypes.

Picnic at Hanging Rock (1975) Haunting film about schoolgirls 'absorbed' into the mysterious Australian landscape.

Top Musicians

Powderfinger Five platinum albums; retired in 2010.

Slim Dusty The twanging NSW legend – great road music.

Christine Anu Torres Strait Island singer who blends Creole-style rap and Islander chants with English.