

Welcome to East Coast Australia

Picture-perfect beaches, rainforests, hip cities and the Great Barrier Reef: just a few of our favourite things along Australia's East Coast.

Into the Wild

More than 18,000km end to end, Australia's East Coast is a rippling ribbon of beaches and rampant wildlife. Offshore, the astonishing Great Barrier Reef is a 2000km-long hypercoloured haven for tropical marine life. Also here are hundreds of islands, from craggy nature reserves to palm-studded paradises. Fringing the land are brilliant beaches, with Australia's best surf breaks peeling into the shore. Inland are bewitching national parks with lush rainforests, jagged peaks and native critters that rate from cute and cuddly (koalas) to downright fearsome (saltwater crocs).

Action Stations

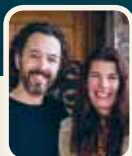
Traversing the East Coast is an exercise in, well, exercise! The sun is shining and the locals are outdoors, running, swimming, surfing, cycling, skating, snorkelling and hiking. Why not join in? Explore the Great Barrier Reef, the most photogenic underwater landscape on earth. Rampage down some white-water rapids, kayak across a lagoon, or set sail through a tropical archipelago. Propel yourself up a mountain, through a national park or alongside a rushing river. Or just head for the beach, where the locals let it all hang out, as democratic as sand.

City Scenes

Home to Indigenous Australians for millennia, Australia's East Coast is also where modern Australia kicked off. The first European settlement was in Sydney, and the city remains a honey-pot lure for anyone looking for a good time. Sassy and ambitious yet unpretentious, Sydneysiders eat, drink, shop and party with hedonistic abandon. To the south, Melbourne is Australia's arts and coffee capital – a bookish, Euro-tinged town with a bohemian soul. Wrapped around river bends, boomtown Brisbane is a glam patchwork of inner-city neighbourhoods. And don't forget Australia's capital, Canberra – so much more than a political filing cabinet!

Eat, Drink & Be Merry

Australia's big East Coast cities lift the lid on a rich culinary experience, with fantastic cafes, sprawling food markets and world-class restaurants. After dark, moody wine bars, student-filled speakeasies and boisterous Aussie pubs provide plenty of excuses to raise a glass. Beyond the cities, foodie delights range from fish and chips straight off the fishing boats to degustation dinners, paired perfectly with luscious wines from the Hunter and Yarra Valleys. The hardest part is deciding what to try first...



Why We Love East Coast Australia

By Charles Rawlings-Way & Meg Worby, Authors

Growing up in modest southern Australian towns, the lure of the East Coast, with its beaches and big cities, was ever-present for us both. Melbourne enticed with bookshops, bars and urban soul; Sydney lured with city-slicker cool and warm waves to splash around in. Towns such as Byron Bay, Noosa and Port Douglas held near-mythical status, demanding to be explored at the first opportunity. And we haven't stopped exploring since! South to north or north to south, travelling the East Coast is Australia's essential road trip.

For more about our authors, see p536.