

Understand East Coast Australia

EAST COAST AUSTRALIA TODAY484

The hot issues up and down the coast: crazy weather, the economy and the football. How are the locals holding up?

HISTORY486

Indigenous Australians, convicts, explorers, gold-diggers, shearers, soldiers, immigrants... The history of the East Coast is quite a page-turner!

CLIMATE CHANGE & THE GREAT BARRIER REEF494

Australia is hotting up, and the gorgeous Great Barrier Reef off the Queensland coast has been affected by the change.

FOOD & WINE499

Top tips on the best seafood, regional delicacies, wine regions, microbreweries and farmers markets all along the coast.

SPORT502

Is Australia losing its sporting mojo? Lamentable Olympic swimming and cricket performances aside, the country still punches above its weight.

East Coast Australia Today

When most people think 'Australia', the East Coast is what springs to mind: big cities, photogenic beaches, coral reefs and rolling surf. But in reality most of Australia – the 'outback' – is a vast desert. Turning its back on the sun-baked interior, the East Coast is a celebration of life on the edge – a long, fertile strip of land where most Aussies live, work and play.

Best on Film

Australia (director Baz Luhrmann; 2008) Sweeping Aussie epic beautifully shot in NSW and Queensland.

The Castle (director Rob Sitch; 1997) Hit comedy gleefully playing with Aussie stereotypes.

Picnic at Hanging Rock (director Peter Weir; 1975) Disquieting film about schoolgirls 'absorbed' into the mysterious Victorian landscape.

Lantana (director Ray Lawrence; 2001) Mystery for grown-ups: a meditation on love, truth and grief.

Two Hands (director Gregor Jordan; 1999) Vicious humour in Sydney's criminal underworld.

Best in Print

The Tree of Man (Patrick White; 1955) Profound story of early pioneers living in the bush.

Johnno (David Malouf; 1975) A coming-of-age tale set in 1940s Brisbane.

Oscar and Lucinda (Peter Carey; 1988) Man Booker Prize winner: how to relocate a glass church.

The Secret River (Kate Grenville; 2005) Of 19th-century convict life around Sydney.

The Bodysurfers (Robert Drewe; 1983) Sexy tales from Sydney's sandy suburbia.

The Big Wet Continues

Much of Australia was wracked by drought for the first decade of this century, a period tragically defined by the apocalyptic 2009 'Black Saturday' bushfires in Victoria. But this all ended in 2011 with record rainfalls across New South Wales and Queensland. These rains were followed by category-five Cyclone Yasi, which dumped further rain across Queensland.

The drought was over, but flood waters inundated dozens of towns, affecting 1 million sq km (roughly the size of France and Germany combined). The Brisbane River broke its banks, flooding vast stretches of Australia's third-largest city. Flooding also hit Victoria, with crops devastated and thousands of livestock drowned. Coal production was affected, crop and livestock losses mounted and tourism took a big hit – costing the nation \$5.6 billion.

Then, in early 2013, southeast Queensland suffered another blow, this time from the tail end of Tropical Cyclone Oswald, which immersed Bundaberg and parts of Brisbane in river water. Residents of low-lying suburbs wrung themselves dry and started rebuilding (again...).

Later in 2013, savage bushfires in the Blue Mountains behind Sydney blazed for weeks, part of an outbreak of more than 100 fires across NSW that burned out almost 300,000 acres of forest and destroyed around 250 homes.

Meanwhile, Out on the Reef

For many climatologists these natural disasters are just part of the growing pattern of human-induced climate change wreaking havoc on Australia's weather.

Climate change remains a hot topic along the East Coast (no pun intended) – particularly when it comes to Queensland's biggest tourist attraction, the Great Barrier Reef. Marine researchers predict disastrous