

Welcome to East Coast Australia

Pack your bags: Australia's east coast is road-tripping nirvana, with picture-perfect beaches, rainforests, hip cities and the Great Barrier Reef.

Into the Wild

Strung out for more than 18,000km end to end, Australia's east coast is a rippling ribbon of beaches and rampant wildlife. Off-shore, the astonishing Great Barrier Reef is a 2000km-long hyper-coloured 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 range from cuddle-worthy (koalas) to photogenic (Ulysses butterflies) and downright fearsome (saltwater crocs).

Action Stations

Traversing the east coast is an exercise in, well...exercise! The sun is shining and fit-looking locals are outdoors – jogging, swimming, surfing, cycling, kayaking, snorkelling, hiking... Why not join in? Get underwater on the Great Barrier Reef, the most photogenic submarine landscape on earth. Rampage down some white-water rapids, kayak across a lagoon, or set sail through a tropical archipelago. Move your shoes 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.

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, boom-town 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 & Celebrate

Australia's big east-coast cities offer rich culinary experiences, 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 bend an elbow and maybe watch a bit of football. Beyond the cities, foodie delights range from fish and chips straight off the fishing boats, to cheese producers, small-town bakeries and degustation dinners, paired perfectly with luscious wines from the Mornington Peninsula or Hunter and Yarra Valleys.



Why I Love East Coast Australia

By Charles Rawlings-Way, Writer

Growing up in a chilly southern Australian town, the lure of the east coast, with its *Endless Summer* beaches and throbbing cities, was ever-present. Melbourne enticed with its book-shops, bars, Carlton Football Club and urban soul; Sydney lured with city-slicker cool and warm waves in which to attempt to surf. Towns such as Byron Bay, Noosa and Port Douglas held near-mythical status, demanding to be explored at the first opportunity. And I haven't stopped exploring since! South–north or north–south, travelling the east coast is Australia's essential road trip.

For more about our writers, see p527

Above: Sydney skyline and the Sydney Harbour Bridge (p52)