

Welcome to Sydney

Book a window seat for your flight to Sydney: day or night, it sure is good-lookin'. Scratch the surface and it only gets better.

Show Pony

Brash is the word that inevitably gets bandied around when it comes to describing the Harbour City, and let's face it, Sydney is one hot mess! Compared to its Australian sister cities, Sydney is loud, uncompromising and in-your-face. Fireworks displays are more dazzling here, heels are higher, bodies more buffed, contact sports more brutal, starlets shinier, drag queens glitzier and chefs more adventurous. Australia's best musos, foodies, actors, stockbrokers, models, writers and architects flock to the city to make their mark, and the effect is dazzling: a hyperenergetic, ambitious marketplace of the soul, where anything goes and everything usually does.

Making a Splash

Defined as much by its rugged coast as its exquisite harbour, Sydney relies on its coastal setting to replenish its reserves of charm; venture too far from the water and the charm suddenly evaporates. Jump on a ferry and Sydney's your oyster – the harbour prisms the city's two halves far enough apart to reveal an abundance of pearls. On the coast, Australia ends abruptly in sheer walls of sandstone punctuated by arcs of golden sand. In summer they're covered with bronzed bodies enjoying a climate that encourages outdoor socialising, exercising, flirting and fun.

After Dark

After a lazy Saturday at the beach, urbane Sydneysiders have a disco nap, hit the show-ers and head out again. There's always a new restaurant to try, undercover bar to hunt down, hip band to check out, sports team to shout at, show to see or crazy party to attend. The city's pretensions to glamour are well balanced by a casualness that means a cool T-shirt and a tidy pair of jeans will get you in most places. But if you want to dress up and show off, there's plenty of opportunity for that among the sparkling lights of the harbour.

On the Wild Side

National parks ring the city and penetrate right into its heart. Large chunks of the harbour are still edged with bush, while parks cut their way through the skyscrapers and suburbs. Consequently native critters turn up in the most surprising places. Great clouds of flying foxes pass overhead at twilight and spend the night rustling around in suburban fig trees, oversized spiders stake out the corners of lounge room walls, possums rattle the roofs of terrace houses, and sulphur-crested cockatoos bleat from the railings of urban balconies. At times Sydney's concrete jungle seems more like an actual one – and doesn't that just make it all the more exciting?



Why I Love Sydney

By Peter Dragicevich, Author

My visits to Sydney were becoming increasingly frequent before I decided to up sticks and move to the city in 1998. Sure, it was the glitzy side that first attracted me – the sense that there was always something thrilling going on somewhere, and if you turned the right corner, you could be part of it. That sense remains, but I've discovered much more to love: the lively food scene, endless days at the beach and the way Sydney's indigenous and convict history is so often hidden in plain sight.

For more about our author, see p272.