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POCKET
SYDNEY

TOP SIGHTS • LOCAL EXPERIENCES

ANDY SYMINGTON



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Welcome to Sydney

Sydney, spectacularly draped around its glorious harbour and beaches, has visual wow factor like few other cities. Scratch the surface and it only gets better. Sydney is exuberant, sassy and stacks of fun, whether you're learning to surf, tramping through marvellous national parks or channeling the city's hedonistic streak in its superb array of eateries.





Sunset over Sydney Harbour Bridge (p36) and the city skyline

RUDY BALASKO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Top Sights



CHRIS HOWE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Sydney Opera House

Visionary harbourside architectural masterpiece. **p32**

Sydney Harbour Bridge

Harbour crossing and Sydney icon. **p36**



SHANELI SHEKHAR/500PX ©

Royal Botanic Garden

Verdant city-centre haven. **p34**

Art Gallery of NSW

Treasure trove of Australian art. **p56**



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Chinatown

Fascinating blend of cultures. **p58**



CHANG JO-YI/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



KRITHNARONG RAKNAGN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Australian Museum

Grande dame of Sydney museums. **p112**

Bondi Beach

Surf a legendary beach. **p144**



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BARAINHUNTER28/BUCKET TRAVEL ©

North Head

Fabulous walking; supreme harbour vistas. **p162**

Eating

Sydney's cuisine rivals that of any great world city. The city truly celebrates Australia's place on the Pacific Rim, marrying fresh local ingredients – excellent seafood is a highlight – with the flavours of Asia, the Mediterranean, the Americas and, of course, its colonial past. Sydneysiders are real foodies, always seeking out the latest hot restaurant.



Where to Eat

Sydney's top restaurants are properly pricey, but eating out needn't be expensive. There are plenty of budget ethnic eateries where you can grab a cheap, zingy pizza or a bowl of noodles. Cafes are a good bet for a solid, often adventurous and usually reasonably priced meal. Pubs either do reliable standard fare, often with excellent prices, or casual but high-quality Modern Australian dining. The numerous BYO (bring your own wine) restaurants offer a

substantially cheaper eating experience; the Inner West is brimful of them.

Vegetarians & Vegans

Sydney is great for herbivores. Unless you wander into a steakhouse by mistake, vegetarians should have no trouble finding satisfying choices on most menus. Some leading restaurants offer separate vegetarian menus, often stretching to multiple-course degustation.

The more socially progressive suburbs such as Newtown

and Glebe have the widest range of veggie options. Surry Hills, Darlinghurst and Kings Cross also have good choices.

Best Restaurants

Quay Inventive fine dining with the best views in Sydney. (p42)

LuMi Inventive Italo-Japanese degustation in a quiet wharfside location in Pyrmont. (p82)

Mr Wong Hip Cantonese joint with perpetual queues out the door. (p68)

Ester Informal but innovative Modern-Australian dining. (p99)

Porteño Delicious slow-cooked meat and bucketloads of atmosphere. (p119)



TIMOTHY CHRISTIANO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Folonomo High-quality not-for-profit eatery. (p120)

Tetsuya's A degustatory journey through multiple inventive courses. (p70)

Best Snacks & Sweets

Cow & the Moon Sydney's best ice-cream. (p93)

Bourke Street Bakery Irresistible pastries, cakes and bread. (p117)

Koi Dessert Bar Unbelievable dessert creations. (p96)

Best Cafes

Single O Still pioneering coffee. (p121)

Grounds of Alexandria Amazing organic farm-cafe. (p95)

Reuben Hills Brunches with a Latin American twist. (p118)

Trio Fight for a seat at this Bondi star. (p153)

Pablo & Rusty's The city centre's best coffee. (p67)

Wedge Narrow but quality-packed Glebe cafe. (p94)

Best Vegetarian & Vegan

Yellow Upmarket vegetarian degustation menus are memorably good. (p138)

Golden Lotus Crisp and fresh Vietnamese vegan fare in Newtown. (p94)

Lentil As Anything Heartening, pay-what-you-want social project. (p94)

Earth to Table Raw, vegan and sugarless creations

work a treat at this cafe. (p152)

Funky Pies Who took the meat out of an Aussie icon? (p152)

Best Seafood

Boathouse on Blackwattle Bay Lovely Glebe location overlooking the water. (p99)

Flying Fish At the end of a Pyrmont pier, and boasting super views. (p84)

Golden Century Meet your meal in the tanks on the way in. (p71)

Azuma Sushi and sashimi of stratospheric quality. (p69)

Drinking & Nightlife

In a city where rum was once the main currency, it's little wonder that drinking plays a big part in the Sydney social scene – whether it's knocking back some tinnies at the beach, schmoozing after work or warming up for a night on the town. Sydney offers plenty of choice in drinking establishments, from the flashy to the trashy.



The Sydney Scene

The relaxation of licensing laws has seen a blooming of 'small bars' in the city centre and inner suburbs. These are great spots, often difficult to find and with a quirky atmosphere, though the drinks don't come cheap.

The local pub, traditionally called a hotel because the liquor laws once meant they had to offer accommodation to serve booze, survives throughout the city. Often on corners, these venerable gems

have been improved in recent years by beer gardens, upgraded food menus and a stupendous array of local craft beers.

Door Policies

Sydney's bouncers are often strict, arbitrary and immune to logic. Being questioned and searched every time you want a drink after 8pm on a weekend can definitely take the edge off a Sydney night out.

It is against the law to serve people who are intoxicated and you won't be admitted to a venue if you ap-

pear drunk. Expect to be questioned about how much you've had to drink that night.

Be prepared to present photo ID with proof of your age.

Lockouts

In an effort to cut down on alcohol-fuelled violence, tough licensing laws have been introduced to a large area of the central city. Within this zone, licensed venues are not permitted to admit people after 1.30am. However, if you arrive before then, the venue is permitted to continue serving



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you alcohol until 3am, or 3.30am in the case of certain venues which you can enter until 2am.

Best Historic Pubs

Hero of Waterloo Sturdy stone stalwart in the Rocks (p45)

Lord Nelson One of three claiming the title of 'oldest pub'. (p46)

Fortune of War Beautiful front bar. (p47)

Courthouse Hotel A slice of an older Newtown. (p102)

Shakespeare Hotel Gloriously traditional Sydney boozier in Surry Hills. (p124)

Best Outdoor Drinking

Watsons Bay Beach Club Take a ferry to this summer and weekend classic. (p159)

Opera Bar Is there a better-located bar in the world? (Pictured; p45)

Glenmore Roof deck with great Opera House views. (p46)

Beresford Hotel Mixed crowd and quality wine and food. (p124)

Best Small Bars

Baxter Inn Whisky-laden city speakeasy. (p71)

Grandma's Kitsch retro basement hideaway. (p73)

Uncle Ming's Low-lit den of dumplings and cocktails. (p71)

Barber Shop Get a short back and sides on your way in. (p72)

Best Dancefloors

Frankie's Pizza Pizza slices, live bands, a nightclub...who needs more? (p71)

Ivy Glam inner-city location with Sydney's top club night. (p71)

Lazybones Lounge Gloriously louche and welcoming Inner West nightspot. (p100)

Arq Flashy and upmarket club in LGBTQ+ heartland. (p126)

Shopping

Shopping is the number one recreational activity in consumerist Sydney. Retail covers a wide range here, from glitzy city-centre boutiques, to koala-heavy tourist tat, to just-so Paddington galleries and grungy Newtown vintage stores. Best of all are the markets, with a bit of everything and a buzzy weekend scene; an essential Sydney experience.



Shopping Areas

Sydney's city centre is brimming over with department, chain and international fashion stores and arcades – shopping here is about as fast and furious as Australia gets. Paddington is the place for art and fashion, while new and second-hand boutiques around Newtown and Surry Hills cater to a hipper, more alternative crowd. Double Bay, Mosman and Balmain are a bit more 'mother of the bride,' and if you're chasing bargains,

head to Chinatown or the Alexandria factory outlets.

Newtown and Glebe have the lion's share of book and record stores. For surf gear, head to Bondi or Manly. Woollahra, Newtown (around St Peters station) and Surry Hills are good for antiques. For souvenirs – from exquisite opals to tacky T-shirts – try the Rocks, Circular Quay and Darling Harbour.

What to Buy

Want something quintessentially Australian

to take home? Head to the Rocks and dig up some opals, an Akubra hat, a Driza-Bone coat or some Blundstone boots. Aboriginal art makes an excellent purchase, but make sure it is ethically sourced.

Sydney has a thriving fashion scene, and a summer dress or Speedos won't eat up luggage space. Ask at music stores or bookshops about local bands and authors. Hunter Valley wine makes a great gift – check your country's duty-free allowance before buying.



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Taxes & Refunds

Sales taxes are included in the advertised price.

Apart from the 10% goods and services tax (GST), the only other sales duties are on things such as alcohol and tobacco, which are best bought at duty-free shops, such as those at the airport. The GST tourist refund scheme (p182) has mostly replaced traditional duty-free shopping.

Best Markets

Paddington Markets

Sydney's most famous market (pictured), selling everything from clothing to palm-reading. (p109)

Bondi Markets Fruit and veg on Saturdays, assorted bric-a-brac on Sundays. (p157)

Glebe Markets One big counter-cultural get-together. (p107)

Carriageworks Farmers Market

Foodies flock here on Saturday mornings. (p105)

Best Jewellery

Paspaley Pearls from northwest Australia. (p75)

Opal Minded Get the classic Aussie gemstone. (p49)

Best Aboriginal Art

Gannon House Gallery Inspiring selection in the Rocks. (p49)

Artery Great range, from original works to printed souvenirs. (p127)

Karlangu Wide selection near Wynyard station. (p75)

Best Bookshops

Gleebooks Well-loved Glebe bookshop, with regular author talks. (p106)

Abbey's Brilliant inner-city bookshop, especially good on history, languages and sci-fi. (p74)

Better Read Than Dead Well-presented and -stocked Newtown store. (p107)