



Australia



AUSTRALIA

Australia is the sixth largest country in the world - more or less the same size as mainland USA. This vast land however also has the lowest population density in the world, with only two people per square kilometre.

Australia is politically divided into six states and two territories, each one offering a different experience for the traveller. There is the drama of the remote 'Outback', the colourful spectacle of the Great Barrier Reef and its coral islands, the excitement of the cosmopolitan cities, the sun and surf at some of the best beaches in the world, and the tropical rainforests of Western Australia. The list is endless in this diverse land of adventure, which boasts 2,000 national parks and 14 World Heritage-listed areas, along with more than 7,000 beaches.



Iconically Australia © Karl Blackwell

Australia is a land of character too, with its melting pot of cultures. For more than 50,000 years the Aboriginal people lived and thrived in the continent's unique environment. It is believed the Aboriginals are the world's oldest civilisation, and in recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in keeping the Aboriginal culture alive and flourishing.

The vast continent at the bottom of the world was the last landmass to be discovered by European explorers. Captain James Cook arrived in Botany Bay in 1770 and sparked off generations of emigration to Australia, which for some time served as a penal colony. It was not until 1860 that two explorers - Robert Burke and William Wills - became the first Europeans to cross Australia from south to north. The country remains a magnet for modern explorers and adventurers and has a great deal to offer tourists and holidaymakers.

Basics

Time: Australia is divided into three time zones. Eastern is GMT +10, Central is GMT +9.5, and Western is GMT +8. Other than the Northern Territory and Queensland, all states observe daylight saving time in summer.

Electricity: Electrical current is 240/250 volts, 50Hz. Three-pin flat blade plugs are used but are different to those in most other countries, so an adapter is normally required.

Money: The Australian Dollar (AUD) is divided into 100 cents. Banks and bureaux de change exchange most foreign currencies. Travellers cheques are also welcome everywhere, but banks take a small commission and it is better to take cheques in major currencies (e.g. US dollars or Euros) to avoid additional charges. Credit cards are widely accepted and ATMs are freely available throughout the country. Banking hours are generally 9.30am to 4pm Monday to Thursday, and 9.30am to 5pm on Friday, but some banks offer extended hours and some are open on Saturday mornings.

Currency Exchange Rates				
A\$1.00	A\$5.00	A\$10.00	A\$100.00	A\$1,000.00
A\$ 1.00	A\$ 5.00	A\$ 10.00	A\$ 100.00	A\$ 1,000.00
C\$ 0.86	C\$ 4.28	C\$ 8.55	C\$ 85.51	C\$ 855.08
€ 0.55	€ 2.74	€ 5.48	€ 54.85	€ 548.46
NZ\$ 1.23	NZ\$ 6.13	NZ\$ 12.27	NZ\$ 122.68	NZ\$ 1,226.80
R 6.22	R 31.12	R 62.24	R 622.36	R 6,223.60
£ 0.48	£ 2.39	£ 4.79	£ 47.86	£ 478.63
US\$ 0.76	US\$ 3.82	US\$ 7.63	US\$ 76.31	US\$ 763.13

Note: These rates are not updated daily and should be used as a guideline only.

Language: English is the official language.

Entry requirements for Americans: US nationals must have a valid passport for intended period of stay. Visa required, except for those with Electronic Travel Authority (ETA).

Entry requirements for UK nationals: UK nationals must have a passport valid for intended period of stay. Visa required, except for those with Electronic Travel Authority (ETA).

Entry requirements for Canadians: Canadian nationals require a passport valid for intended period of stay. Visa

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Entry requirements for South Africans: South African nationals must have a passport valid for the duration of the stay. A visa is required.

Entry requirements for New Zealanders: New Zealanders require a valid passport on entry to Australia. A Special Category Visa (SCV) is issued on arrival after completing a passenger card.

Entry requirements for Irish nationals: Irish nationals must have a passport valid for the intended period of stay. Visa required, except for those with Electronic Travel Authority (ETA).

Passport/Visa Note: An ETA is an electronically issued and verified visa, not visible in a passport. ETAs are issued to passengers travelling for tourist or business purposes. Tourist ETAs are valid for three months. ETAs are obtainable online at: www.eta.immi.gov.au or through most travel agents.

Health: A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required by travellers over one year of age arriving within six days of having stayed overnight or longer in an infected country. No other special immunizations or medications are required for most trips to Australia, however insect repellents are strongly advised because of the risk of Murray Valley encephalitis, Ross River virus infections, dengue fever and other mosquito-borne illnesses. Another health risk is sunburn, and visitors are advised to take precautions. Medical services are excellent, but can be expensive so travellers should ensure that they have adequate insurance. Australia has a reciprocal health agreement with the United Kingdom providing for free hospital emergency medical treatment; proof of UK residence is required.

Tipping: There are no mandatory gratuities in restaurant service charges of any kind in Australia, and tips are not expected anywhere, although it is becoming more common in expensive restaurants in the bigger cities to leave some money for good service.

Climate: Australia is temperate, most of the country receiving more than 3,000 hours of sunshine a year. In summer (December to March) the average temperature is 84°F (29°C). The hottest region is the northern two-thirds of the continent, which experiences humid and wet conditions in summer. Further south summer is warm with occasional hot spells and mild nights. Winter (June to August) averages 56°F (13°C) for the country as a whole, with warm days and mild nights in the northern areas, becoming cool and showery in the south (although there are still plenty of sunny days).

Safety: The crime rate in Australia is low, however travellers should be aware that tourists could be targeted by petty criminals. Be vigilant about personal possessions and travel documents, particularly in popular tourist destinations such as along the Gold Coast. There has been an increase in incidents of spiked drinks and women in particular should be cautious in nightspots; many victims were also sexually assaulted. Tropical cyclones normally occur between November and April in some parts of Australia, usually in Western Australia, Queensland and Northern Territory. There is a serious risk of bush fires in summer, especially in Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales and ACT. During the summer months, usually between October and May, the shallow coastal waters of northern Australia and Queensland become infested with marine stingers, commonly known as box jellyfish, whose sting is highly dangerous and can be deadly. Visitors should pay attention to signs on beaches and follow the instructions of local lifeguards.

Customs: Generally an informal attitude, in dress and behaviour, prevails in most social and business situations. Sport, particularly rugby and cricket, is almost a religion.

Business: Australian business culture is generally relaxed and informal, although punctuality for meetings is imperative, and business dress is conservative: a dark suit and tie for men and a skirt suit for women. Women expect to be treated the same as their male counterparts, and firm handshakes between both men and women are standard at the beginning and end of every meeting. Business cards can be exchanged, but there are no formalities regarding this practice. In business dealings, brevity is appreciated and 'plain talking' is respected; however do not try to rush decision-making, as input from all sectors is customarily considered before reaching a conclusion. Business hours are generally 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

Communications: The international access code for Australia is +61. The outgoing code is 0011 followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 001144 for the United Kingdom). The area code for both Canberra and Sydney is (0)2. Local calls from public payphones are unlimited and cost a standard rate, while international and long distance calls are charged according to the time spent on the phone. Mobile phone operators use GSM and CDMA networks (area code (0)4); mobile phones are available for rent. Internet cafes are widely available.

Duty Free: Travellers to Australia over 18 years do not have to pay customs duty on 2.25 litres of alcohol; 250 cigarettes or 250g cigars or other tobacco products. Gifts are included in the A\$900 duty-free allowance. Fresh produce and animal/plant products are prohibited.

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Tourism

Australian Tourist Commission, Sydney: +61 (0)2 9360 1111 or www.australia.com

Australia Embassies

Embassy of Australia, Washington DC, United States: +1 202 797 3000.

Australian High Commission, London, United Kingdom: +44 (0)20 7379 4334.

Australian High Commission, Ottawa, Canada: +1 613 236 0841.

Australian High Commission, Pretoria, South Africa: +27 (0)12 423 6000.

Australian Embassy, Dublin, Ireland: +353 (0)1 664 5300.

Australian High Commission, Wellington, New Zealand: +64 (0)4 473 6411.

Foreign Embassies in Australia

Embassy of the United States, Canberra: +61 (0)2 6214 5600.

British High Commission, Canberra: +61 (0)2 6270 6666.

Canadian High Commission, Canberra: +61 (0)2 6270 4000.

South African High Commission, Canberra: +61 (0)2 6273 2424-7.

Embassy of Ireland, Canberra: +61 (0)2 6273 3022.

New Zealand High Commission, Canberra: +61 (0)2 6270 4211.

Australia Emergency Numbers

Emergencies: 000 (112 on cellphones).

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