

AUSTRALIA

COUNTRY INFORMATION

AUSTRALIA is a land of diversity. From the climate, geography, wildlife, and culture, Australia has boundless opportunities for exploration and learning. Founded in 1788 as a British penal colony, established as the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901 and host of the 2000 Olympic Games, Australia's rich history can be discovered from Sydney to Perth.

Australia is known for its unique and diverse wildlife, friendly citizens, and aboriginal peoples. Apart from cultural diversity, Australia offers fine dining, world renowned wines, beautiful beaches, desert wilderness, and metropolitan cities.

Passport and Visa Information

- All travelers to Australia, other than Australian and New Zealand citizens, are required to hold a valid visa to travel to Australia.
- U. S. citizens may apply for an ETA (Electronic Travel Authority) at [<http://www.immi.gov.au/visitors/tourist/976/index.htm>]. The cost for the ETA is \$20 (Australian dollars), and it is valid for three months within a twelve month period from the date of grant.
- Application for a tourist visa costs \$100 Australian dollars and can be completed online, in person, or by mail. With this visa, you can apply for a stay of up to twelve months.
- Please note that American citizens that overstay their ETA or visa, even for short periods, may be subject to exclusion, detention, and removal.
- Your passport must be **valid for the length of stay** planned in Australia.

Note: Please be aware that although Ker & Downey will advise you of the current information concerning visas and other requirements, it is your responsibility to reconfirm the information and obtain all necessary documents for entry to countries listed on your itinerary. Visa requirements change frequently.

Health Requirements and Information

No specific vaccinations are required for entry into Australia. However, a yellow fever vaccination certificate will be required if travelling from an infected area within six days of your arrival in Australia. If you are planning any stopovers en route it is advisable to check with your general practitioner well in advance.

There have also been cases of dengue fever in the northwest, so appropriate precautions should be taken against mosquito bites.

Customs

Visitors to Australia over age 18 may bring goods not exceeding 900 Australian dollars and limited to:

- 2.25 L of alcohol
- 250 cigarettes or 250g of tobacco (one opened packet of 25 cigarettes is allowed)

You may import or export any amount of foreign or local currency, but you must declare any amount equivalent to A\$10,000.

Airport Information

The Sydney International Airport named Kingsford Smith International is located in the Sydney suburb of Mascot and has three terminals: T1 for International flights, T2 for Domestic flights, and T3 for Qantas flights.

Melbourne International Airport is located about 16 miles from Melbourne and has four terminals: T1 for domestic flights on Qantas and Jetstar, T2 for international flights, T3 for domestic Virgin Blue and Rex, and T4 for domestic flights on Tiger Airways.

Perth International Airport is located about 8 miles north of Perth and has three terminals: T1 is for international flights, T2 is Qantas, QantasLink and Jetstar, and T3 is for Alliance Airlines, Ozjet, Skywest Airlines, and Virgin Blue.

The airports all have standard shopping, car rental and money exchanging facilities.

Airport Departure Tax

Airport departure taxes are included in the price of your airline ticket.

Safety

Tourists should take care in Sydney, as a number of backpackers have been attacked. You should be especially cautious when using ATMs. Australia is relatively safe for women travelers, although in the outback there still remains a patriarchal culture. When travelling into the outback and interior regions of Australia, specific precautions should be taken. You should take adequate supplies, and always leave information of your whereabouts. Special care and respect of natural habitats is recommended. Always ask permission before taking photographs of aborigines.

Climate

Australia offers extreme variations in climate, from tropical to temperate.

Nov – Mar is generally hot everywhere, with temperatures increasing the further north you are. It is also the wet season in the north of Australia, with cyclones common from January to March.

Apr – Sept has occasional rain in the south which can be particularly heavy.

Jun – Aug is the winter skiing season in the southern parts of Australia.

Sep – Nov is when you will see the Australian wildflowers in central and western Australia.

Sydney, Australia	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ave. Max Temperature (°F)	78	79	77	73	67	64	62	65	69	72	74	77
Ave. Min Temperature (°F)	67	68	65	60	55	51	49	50	54	58	61	65
Ave. Precipitation (in)	4.48	4.55	3.87	3.94	5.36	3.3	.71	3.83	2.44	3.07	3.45	2.15

Weather conditions may vary in other locations of Australia.

Clothing

Australia is a relaxed and casual place. The rule for most establishments is 'enclosed footwear'. Sneakers, joggers, sandshoes, and sandals are fine for both men and women except in up-market restaurants and exclusive nightclubs. A jacket may be required in some nightclubs and restaurants. Comfortable shoes are a must for hiking through national parks. Depending on the forecast, dressing in layers can be a good idea - a long sleeved shirt, a light sweater, and a jacket.

Currency

The unit of currency is the Australian Dollar (A\$) which is divided into 100 cents

Australian coins include: 5c, 10c, 20c, 50c, \$1 and \$2. Australian notes include \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100.

- All major credit cards and traveler's checks, in any international currency, are widely accepted.
- Hours are generally Mon to Thu 9:30am-4:00pm and Fri 9:30am-5:00pm and vary throughout the country.
- You can exchange money at most of the major banks around Australia and can also withdraw money from any ATM. The major banks include ANZ, Commonwealth, National, St. George, and Westpac. However, if you are traveling away from the main towns and cities, be aware that banks and ATM's are few and far between, so go prepared with money.

Gratuities

Tipping is not customary in Australia. A 10% tip in upscale restaurants is acceptable. Waiters and waitresses do not rely on tips for their income. Bar staff in pubs are happy with loose change. Taxi drivers do not expect tips, but it is usual to round-up the fare to the nearest dollar or two. You may wish to tip a tour guide or tourist coach driver, though this is not expected either.

Wildlife

Australian animals are unique to the country and have evolved in isolation. Some species to look for are the bandicoot, bilby, dingo, echidna, frilled lizard, goanna, grey and red kangaroo, koala, numbat, platypus, quokka, quoll, Tasmanian devil, wallaby, and wombat.

Australian birdlife is as unique as the animal life. Some species to watch for are the black and sulphur crested cockatoo, black swan, bowerbird, brolga, budgerigar, cassowary, emu, galah, jabiru, kookaburra, lyrebird, magpie, rainbow lorikeet, rosella, and wedge-tailed eagle.

Aquatic species include archerfish, fur seal, sea lion, barramundi, dolphin, fairy penguin, various ray species, freshwater crocodile, Gippsland water dragon, grey nurse shark, humpback whale, lungfish, marine turtles, puffer fish and mudskipper.

Food

Australian cuisine is based on British food, consisting of meat pies, roasted meat, steaks, chops, and assorted vegetables. The country has also adopted cuisine from its many immigrant groups ranging from Asian to Mediterranean, providing a wide variety of choices. Barbeque is popular as well as a dish called a pie floater, which is a small meat pie served upside down on a bed of pea soup and covered in ketchup.

Australia's wine industry is well known and they export over 400 million liters a year. Wineries can be found in the southeast predominately in New South Wales, Victoria, and the southern parts of South Australia and Western Australia.

Shopping

Although prices are marked to the cent, the total purchase will be rounded to the nearest 5c.

GST

GST stands for Goods and Service Tax and is similar to the British system of VAT. There are several GST free shopping agents, available for both international travelers and Australians who will be leaving the country. If you are shopping in an average store, then make sure you keep your receipts, as you can claim

GST back (10%) at the airport before leaving through the TRS (Tourist Refund Scheme). This 'GST back' can be calculated by dividing the purchase amount by 11.

A few rules apply towards this:

- The purchase must have been over \$300 (this can be made up of several purchases as long as they are on the same tax invoice).
- You must be leaving the country within 30 days.
- Products must be carried in hand luggage (and be of a suitable size).
- You must carry a tax invoice for the product purchased.
- GST must have been paid on the goods to claim it back.
- Beer and spirit products are not accepted.
- Consumables wholly or partly consumed in Australia are not acceptable.
- Goods must not be prohibited goods.

You can also claim back WET (Wine Equalization Tax), which works out as 14.5% of the price paid.

Time Zone

- Norfolk Island: GMT + 11:30
- Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria: GMT + 10
- Northern Territory, South Australia: GMT + 9:30
- Western Australia: GMT + 8

Language

English and many minority languages

Voltage

230/240 Volts AC 50Hz

Three-pin plugs are used although an adapter is required.

Emergency Numbers

Emergency: 000 **Note:** Do not dial this number if the situation is not an emergency.

You can also dial 112 on your mobile phone even if there is no coverage from your own provider or if your phone's SIM card has been removed.

Alcohol and drug information service: 1800 422 599

Poisons information hotline: 13 11 26

International Calling

To call Australia from the U.S. or Canada, dial (011 + 61) before the number. Omit any leading 0 in the area code.

To call the U.S. or Canada from Australia, dial (0011 + 1) before the number.

Suggested Reading List

Bryson, Bill. *In a Sunburned Country*: The story of the author's travels through Australia and his thoughts on the people, wildlife, and geography.

Crittall, Ron; Marc Llewellyn, and Lee Mylne. *Frommer's Australia 2008*: A well-organized and updated guide book to the country.

Geller, Rusty. *Americans' Survival Guide to Australia and Australian-American Dictionary*: A practical handbook to the country that includes a dictionary to help understand the native colloquialisms.