

Directory

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ACCOMMODATION

It's easy to get a good night's sleep in Australia, as it offers everything from the tent-pegged confines of camping grounds and the communal space of hostels to gourmet breakfasts in guesthouses, chaperoned farm stays and everything-at-your-fingertips resorts, plus the gamut of hotel and motel lodgings.

The accommodation listings in this book are organised into budget, midrange and top-end sections. These listings are in order of budget, based on a mixture of atmosphere, cleanliness, facilities, location and authorial mood of the day. Places that primarily offer tent and campervan sites (eg camping

PRACTICALITIES

- Leaf through the daily *Sydney Morning Herald*, Melbourne's *Age* or the national *Australian* broadsheets.
- Tune in to ABC on the radio – pick a program and frequency from www.abc.net.au/radio.
- On the box watch the ad-free ABC, the government-sponsored and multi-cultural SBS, or one of three commercial TV stations; Seven, Nine and Ten.
- Videos you buy or watch will be based on the PAL system, also used in New Zealand and most of Europe.
- Use a three-pin adaptor (different to British three-pin adaptors) to plug into the electricity supply (240V AC, 50Hz).
- For weights and measures, the metric system is used.

grounds and holiday parks) appear at the tail of the accommodation section.

We generally treat any place that charges up to \$100 per double as budget accommodation. Midrange facilities are usually in the range of \$100 to \$160 per double, although B&Bs (considered midrange) often go for as much as \$200 for a double. The top-end tag is mostly applied to places charging more than \$160 per double. In more expensive areas, however, such as Far North Queensland, Kangaroo Island, metropolitan Sydney and Melbourne, and the tourist towns surrounding these cities, budget can mean paying up to \$120 per double, and midrange places can charge up to \$180 for a double.

In most areas you'll find seasonal price variations. During the high season over summer (December to February) and at other peak times, particularly school and public holidays, prices are usually at their highest, whereas outside these times you will find useful discounts and lower walk-in rates. An exception is the Top End, where the Wet season (roughly October to March) is the low season, and prices can drop substantially. Another exception is the ski resorts whose peak season is winter.

BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com. You'll find the true, insider low-down on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

Low or normal-season prices (as opposed to peak-season prices) are quoted in this guidebook unless otherwise indicated. Peak season generally encompasses Christmas to New Year and school holidays (see p1008). The weekend escape is a notion that figures prominently in the Australian psyche, meaning accommodation from Friday night through to Sunday can be in greater demand (and pricier) in major holiday areas.

B&Bs

The local 'bed and breakfast' (guesthouse) birth rate is climbing rapidly. Options include everything from restored miners' cottages, converted barns, rambling old houses, upmarket country manors and beachside bungalows, to a simple bedroom in a family home. In areas that tend to attract weekenders – quaint historic towns, wine regions, accessible forest regions such as the Blue Mountains in New South Wales (NSW) and the Dandenongs in Victoria – B&Bs are often upmarket and will charge a small fortune for stays between Friday and Sunday in high season. Tariffs are typically in the \$100 to \$200 (per double) bracket, but can be higher.

Local tourist offices can usually provide a list of places.

Online resources:

australianbandb.com.au (www.australianbandb.com.au)

babs.com.au (www.babs.com.au)

OZBedandBreakfast.com (www.ozbedandbreakfast.com)

Camping & Caravanning

The cheapest accommodation lies outdoors, where the nightly cost of camping for two people is usually between \$15 and \$25, slightly

CAMP SITES

Unless otherwise stated, prices for camp sites listed throughout this book are for two people.

more for a powered site. Whether you're packing a tent, driving a campervan or towing a caravan ('trailer' in North American-speak), camping in the bush is a highlight of travelling in Australia. In the outback and northern Australia, you often won't even need a tent, and nights spent around a camp fire under the stars are unforgettable. Staying at designated sites in national parks normally costs between \$5 and \$9 per person. Note that most city camping grounds lie at least several kilometres from the town centre, so they're a more convenient option if you have wheels.

Almost all caravan or holiday parks are equipped with hot showers, flushing toilets and laundry facilities, and frequently a pool. Some still have old on-site caravans for rent, and most have on-site cabins. Cabin sizes and facilities vary, but expect to pay \$70 to \$80 for a small cabin with a kitchenette and up to \$130 for a two-bedroom cabin with a fully-equipped kitchen, lounge room, TV and stereo, veranda, and beds for up to six people. Regardless of the vintage or style of cabin, they're generally excellent value if you're on the road for a while, are travelling in a group, or have a family in tow. They allow you to be completely self-sufficient and often provide more space than a motel or hotel room.

Caravan parks, which encompass tent sites, caravan sites and cabins, are popular along coastal areas. In summer months and school holidays they're often booked out well in advance. Well-touristed areas (other than cities) have the greatest number of parks.

If you intend on doing a lot of caravanning/camping, consider joining one of the major chains, like **Big 4** (www.big4.com.au), which offer discounts at member parks.

It's also useful to get your hands on *Camps Australia Wide*, a HEMA publication containing maps and information about camp sites and rest stops that are either free, or have a capped rate for the 12 months following publication.

Western Australia (WA) has roadside overnight stops (designated by a '24' symbol) for travellers on the road that are free and usually well positioned to break up a long drive. A handy WA *Main Roads* brochure, available at most WA visitors centres, covers these and includes what facilities are available at each stop.

Bear in mind that camping is best done during winter (ie the dry season) across the north of Australia, and during summer in the south of the country.

Holiday Apartments

Self-contained holiday apartments or flats are another mainstay on the Australian landscape. They range from simple, studio-like rooms with a small kitchenette, to two-bedroom apartments with full laundries and state-of-the-art entertainment systems. They are great value for multi-night stays. Sometimes they come in small, single-storey blocks but in tourist hotspots like the Gold Coast expect a sea of high-rises. For a two-bedroom flat, you're looking at anywhere from \$80 to \$140 per night (but much higher in peak season). The other alternative in major cities is to take out a serviced apartment.

Hostels

Backpacker hostels are exceedingly popular in Australian cities, and along coastal tourist trails. In the outback and rural areas you'll be hard pressed to find one. Highly social affairs, they're generally overflowing with 18 to 30-year olds, but some have reinvented themselves to attract other travellers who simply want to sleep for cheap.

Hostels provide varying levels of accommodation, from the austere simplicity of wilderness hostels to city-centre buildings with

a café-bar and some en suite rooms. Most of the accommodation is in dormitories (bunk rooms), which can range in size from four bunk beds to 60. Many hostels also provide twin rooms and even doubles. Typically a dorm bed costs \$19 to \$26 per night and a double (usually without bathroom) \$70 to \$90. Hostels generally have cooking facilities, a communal area with a TV, laundry facilities and sometimes travel offices and job centres. There's often a maximum-stay period (usually five to seven days). Bed linen is often provided; sleeping bags are not welcome due to hygiene concerns and the risk of introducing bed bugs.

Some places will only admit overseas backpackers; this mainly applies to city hostels that have had problems with locals sleeping over and bothering the backpackers. Hostels that discourage or ban Aussies say it's only a rowdy minority that makes trouble, and will often just ask for identification in order to deter potential troublemakers, but it can be annoying and discriminatory for genuine people trying to travel in their own country. Also watch out for hostels catering expressly to working backpackers, where facilities can be minimal but rent can be high.

TEN GOOD REASONS TO PITCH A TENT

- **Glenelg River** (p544) In Lower Glenelg National Park, choose from nine fabulous riverbank camp sites between Nelson and Dartmoor in Victoria's southwest.
- **Crayfish Beach** (p395) On Hook Island in the Whitsunday Islands, this national park beach has 12 secluded camp sites.
- **September Beach** (p770) Tucked away in Lincoln National Park on South Australia's Eyre Peninsula, this beach has better-than-basic facilities and a stunning setting.
- **Litchfield National Park** (p818) A hop, skip and a jump from Darwin, you can choose from basic or rugged camp sites, or family-friendly public camp sites with excellent facilities.
- **Bay of Fires** (p660) Free camping spots pepper this bay in Tassie's northeast. The sheltered sites at Policemans Point are the pick of the bunch.
- **Boodjamulla (Lawn Hill) National Park** (p420) Amid 20km of walking tracks and national park, this camping ground has good facilities and a stunning location.
- **Dampier Peninsula** (p981) Around Cape Leveque in WA's Kimberley there is a scattering of exquisite camping options, from bare-bone shelters to award-winning, eco-tourism sites.
- **Quamby Falls** (p338) Bush camping at its best; dine on damper beneath one of the best night skies you'll find in all of Queensland.
- **Murramarang National Park** (p234) There are idyllic camping grounds within this coastal park; Pebbly Beach is tent-only and truly low-key.
- **Kosciuszko Mountain Retreat** (p242) Best in the summer months, this private park is a serene little spot set in the bushland of NSW's Snowy Mountains.

HOSTEL ORGANISATIONS & CHAINS

Australia has over 140 hostels that are part of the Youth Hostels Association (YHA; ☎ 02-9261 1111; www.yha.com.au). The YHA is part of **Hostelling International** (HIH; www.hihostels.com), also known as the International Youth Hostel Federation (IHYF), so if you're already a member of that organisation in your own country, your membership entitles you to YHA rates in the relevant Australian hostels. Nightly charges are between \$10 and \$30 for members; most hostels also take non-YHA members for an extra \$3.50. Preferably, visitors to Australia should purchase an HI card in their country of residence, but you can also buy one at major local YHA hostels at a cost of \$37 for 12 months; see the HI or YHA websites

for further details. Australian residents can become full YHA members for \$52/85 for one/two years; join online, at a state office or at any youth hostel.

A new trend in hostels is represented by **base BACKPACKERS** (www.basebackpackers.com), an upmarket hostel chain that emphasises comfort and offers extensive facilities – one of its innovations is a women-only floor.

More information on useful international hostel organisations:

Nomads Backpackers (☎ 02-9299 7710; www.nomadsworld.com; 89 York St, Sydney) Membership (\$34 for 12 months) entitles you to numerous discounts.

VIP Backpacker Resorts (☎ 07-3395 6111; www.vipbackpackers.com) Membership is \$43/57 for one/two years and entitles you to many discounts.

ECO-FRIENDLY TRAVEL

Choosing eco-friendly tours and accommodation is one of the best ways you can limit your impact on the environment while you travel. But what exactly is ecotourism? Basically any tourism venture that is ecologically sustainable, has a primary focus on experiencing natural areas, and fosters environmental and cultural understanding and conservation. Obvious choices include the hostel using energy-efficient methods; the cottage industry that gives back to its community; the small group tour over big coach companies.

In other instances however, 'eco-tour' or 'eco-lodge' doesn't necessarily equate to eco-friendly, and the distinction between well-meaning and well-marketed can be blurry. Fortunately, the following initiatives have come up with guidelines that should steer you in the right direction.

Look for operators sporting the eco-tick assurance, determined by Ecotourism Australia (www.ecotourism.org.au). This accreditation is rigorous and graded, depending on the degree of on a number of factors including (but not limited to) business ethics, environmental sustainability, and cultural respect and sensitivity.

Also keep an eye out for accreditation by the following:

Green Globe 21 (http://greenglobe21.com) A benchmarking certification scheme for all sectors in the tourism industry, working towards a minimum standard for companies and communities.

Sustainable Travel International (www.sustainabletravelinternational.org) Has developed an eco-certification programme.

Green Building Council of Australia (www.gbcaus.org) Has a green star rating for buildings (examining design and construct).

South Australian Tourism Commission (www.tourism.sa.gov.au/tourism/SustainableTourismPackage.asp) Has developed a sustainable tourism strategy.

Best eco-experiences

Our authors on this guide reckon the following are among the best eco-experiences in Oz:

- Tasmanian Safaris (p611)
- Sanctuary Retreat (p414)
- Paperbark Camp (p233)
- Eternity Springs B&B (p203)
- Moreton Bay Escapes (p323)
- Straddie Kingfisher Tours (p325)
- Apollo Bay's YHA Eco Beach (p534)
- Coorong Wilderness Lodge (p754)

Hotels & Motels

Except for pubs, the hotels that exist in cities or well-touristed places are generally of the business or luxury variety (insert the name of your favourite chain here), where you get a comfortable, anonymous and mod con-filled room in a multistorey block. These places tend to have a pool, restaurant/café, room service and various other facilities. For these hotels we quote 'rack rates' (official advertised rates), though significant discounts can be offered when business is quiet.

Motels (or motor inns) offer comfortable budget to midrange accommodation and are found all over Australia. Prices vary and there's rarely a cheaper rate for singles, so motels are better for couples or groups of three. Most motels are modern, low rise, and have similar facilities (tea- and coffee-making, fridge, TV, air-con, bathroom) but the price will indicate the standard. You'll mostly pay between \$60 and \$120 for a room.

Useful booking agencies that can save you some dosh:

Lastminute.com (www.au.lastminute.com)

Quickbeds.com (www.quickbeds.com.au)

Wotif.com (www.wotif.com.au)

Pubs

For the budget traveller, hotels in Australia are the ones that serve beer, and are commonly known as pubs (from the term 'public house'). In country towns, pubs are invariably found in the town centre. Many were built during boom times, so they're often among the largest, most extravagant buildings in town. In tourist areas some of these pubs have been restored as heritage buildings, but generally, the rooms remain small, old fashioned and weathered, with a long amble down the hall to the bathroom. They're usually cheap and central, but if you're a light sleeper, avoid booking a room right above the bar and check whether a band is playing downstairs that night.

Standard pubs have singles/doubles with shared facilities starting at around \$35/60, more if you want a private bathroom.

Rental & Long-term Accommodation

If you're in Australia for a while (visas permitting), then a rental property or room in a shared flat or house will be an economical option. Delve into the classified advertisement sections of the daily newspapers; Wednesday

and Saturday are usually the best days. Notice boards in universities, hostels, bookshops and cafés are also good to check out. Properties that are listed through a real estate agent necessitate at least a six-month lease, plus a bond and first month's rent up front.

Useful websites:

Couch Surfing (www.couchsurfing.com) Hooks you up with spare couches and new friends around the world.

Domain.com.au (www.domain.com.au) Lists holiday and long-term rentals.

Flatmate Finders (www.flatmatefinders.com.au) Good site for long-term share accommodation in Sydney and Melbourne.

Sleeping with the Enemy (www.sleepingwiththeenemy.com) Another good site for long-term accommodation in Sydney and Cairns.

Other Accommodation

There are lots of less-conventional and, in some cases, uniquely Australian accommodation possibilities scattered across the country.

A decent number of the country's farms offer a bed for a night. A couple of remote outback stations also allow you to stay in homestead rooms or shearers' quarters and try activities such as horseback riding. Check out **Australian Farmstays** (www.australianfarmstay.com.au) for your options. State tourist offices can also tell you what's available.

Back within city limits, it's sometimes possible to stay in the hostels and halls of residence normally occupied by university students, though you'll need to time your stay to coincide with the longer university holiday periods.

ACTIVITIES

Although Australia provides plenty of excuses to sit back and do little more than roll your eyes across some fine landscape, that same landscape lends itself very well to any number of energetic pursuits, whether it's on the rocks, wilderness trails and mountains of dry land, or on the offshore swells and reefs. The following is a general rundown of what's possible; for more detail read the individual Activities sections at the start of each state and territory chapter.

Adrenalin-charged Activities

Fantastic sites for rock climbing and abseiling include the Blue Mountains (p148) in NSW, Victoria's Mt Arapiles (p550) and Mt Buffalo in the High Country (p582). In Tasmania

head to the spectacular Hazards at Coles Bay (p656) in Freycinet National Park, and in WA, West Cape Howe National Park (p926). In Queensland you don't even need to leave the big smoke thanks to the excellent abseiling on offer at Kangaroo Point (p308). Local professionals can set you up with equipment and training. For online info on rock climbing in Australia, visit www.climbing.com.au or www.rock.com.au, and in Victoria contact the **Victorian Climbing Club** (www.vicclimb.org.au).

Tandem paragliding and flights are available anywhere there are good take-off and landing points, and thermal winds. A good place to learn is Bright (p583) in the Victorian High Country; the national paragliding championships are held annually in Manilla (p208) in NSW. Further north, Byron Bay (p195) also has outfits to get you hang-gliding.

Skydiving and parachuting are also widely practised; try Goolwa (p735) on the Fleurieu Peninsula in SA, Coffs Harbour in NSW (p188), and Mission Beach (p413) and Caloundra (p340) in Queensland. Most clubs are listed in the *Yellow Pages* telephone directory.

Elastic entertainment is all the rage in Queensland with bungee jumping in Cairns (p426); on the Gold Coast (p332) there's also an assortment of stomach-churning rides.

Bushwalking

Bushwalking is supremely popular in Australia and vast tracts of untouched scrub and forest provide ample opportunity. The best time to go varies significantly from state to state, but a general rule is that the further north you go the more tropical and humid the climate gets; June to August are the best walking months up top and in the south, summer – December to March – is better. See the Responsible Bushwalking boxed text, p63.

You can follow fantastic trails through many national parks. Notable walks include the Overland Track (p694), and the South Coast Track (p695) and Frenchman's Cap walk (p690) in Tasmania, the Australian Alps Walking Track (p596) and Great South West Walk (p543) in Victoria, the Bibbulmun Track (p873) in WA, and the Thorsborne Trail (p411) across Hinchinbrook Island in Queensland.

In NSW you can trek between Sydney and Newcastle on the Great North Walk (p155), or try the Royal National Park's coastal walking trail (p139), plus any number of rugged trails in the Blue Mountains (p146), Mt Kosci-

uszko (p241) or Warrumbungle National Park (p222). In SA there's the epic 1200km Heysen Trail (p705).

Walking in Australia by Lonely Planet provides good detailed information about bushwalking around the country.

Cycling

Avid cyclists have access to lots of great cycling routes and can tour the country for days, weekends or even multiweek trips.

Standout routes for longer rides include the Mountains Rail Trail (p590), the East Gippsland Rail Trail (p598), and the 250km Wilderness Bike Ride (p602), all in Victoria.

In WA, the spanky new Munda Biddi Mountain Bike Trail (p873) offers 900km of pedal power.

Individual chapters list bike-hire companies where relevant. Rates charged by most outfits for renting road or mountain bikes (not including the discounted fees offered by budget accommodation to their guests) are anywhere from \$8 to \$14 per hour, and \$18 to \$40 per day. Security deposits can range from \$50 to \$200, depending on the rental period.

Most states have helpful bicycle organisations that provide maps and advice; see p1024 and each destination chapter for more information. See Lonely Planet's *Cycling Australia* for other useful contacts and details of popular routes. More information and news on local pedal power is available online at www.bicycles.net.au.

Diving & Snorkelling

The Great Barrier Reef has more dazzling dive sites than you can poke a fin at; see the Best Dive Sites boxed text, p292.

In WA the Ningaloo Reef (p965) is every bit as interesting as the east-coast reefs, without the tourist numbers, and there are spectacular artificial reefs created by sunken ships at Albany (p925) and Dunsborough (p911).

The Rapid Bay jetty off the Gulf St Vincent coast (p704) in SA is renowned for its abundant marine life and in Tasmania, Governor Island (p658) and Eaglehawk Neck (p648) are popular spots. In NSW, Jervis Bay (p233) is a popular spot.

PADI dive courses are offered throughout the country and on the east coast you don't have to travel far before stumbling across one. They are particularly prevalent in diving meccas like Cairns and Port Douglas. Also, don't

forget it's cheap to hire a mask, snorkel and fins and you can enjoy the marine life by snorkelling.

Fishing

Barramundi fishing is hugely popular across the Top End, particularly around Borroloola (p835) in the Northern Territory (NT), and Normanton (p419), Karumba (p419) and Lake Tinaroo (p442) in Queensland.

Ocean fishing is possible right around the country, from a pier or a beach, or on an organised deep-sea charter. There are many fine rivers and lakes where you can fish for trout, redfin and perch in Tasmania (p609).

The uninitiated may think the website **Fishnet** (www.fishnet.com.au) is devoted to stockings, but those keen on all aspects of Australian fishing know better.

Skiing & Snowboarding

Australia has a small but enthusiastic skiing industry, with snowfields straddling the NSW-Victoria border. The season is relatively short, however, running from about mid-June to early September, and snowfalls can be unpredictable. The top places to ski are the Snowy Mountains (p239) in NSW, and Mt Buller (p579) and Falls Creek (p585) in Victoria's High Country.

The website www.ski.com.au has links to major resorts and snow reports.

Surfing

World-class waves can be ridden all around Australia, from Queensland's Gold Coast (p332), along the entire NSW coast (p113) and fine beaches in Victoria (p472). In Tasmania head to Marawah (p684), and in SA, to Cactus Beach (p772). Southern WA is a surfing mecca, and Margaret River (p912) is the heartland.

See the Where to Surf in Australia boxed text (pp534-5) for more detail on surfing sites.

The *Surfer's Travel Guide*, published by Liquid Addictions, provides a detailed description of just about every break along the Australian coast, and is a must-have tome for avid surfers.

(More) Water Sports

The places with the most activities on offer are those with the most visitors, such as Airlie Beach (p387), Cairns (p425) and the Gold Coast (p327) in Queensland.

Sailing is a popular activity around the islands of the Great Barrier Reef (see the boxed text, p394) and all along the east coast, where you can take lessons or sometimes just pitch in and help crew a yacht. The best places for info are the local sailing clubs.

Canoeing and kayaking can be enjoyed on rivers at Katherine Gorge (p832) in the NT, and Barrington Tops National Park (p168) in NSW. Sea kayaking is big around Tasmania's D'Entrecasteaux Channel (p641) and Freycinet Peninsula (p656), and Mission Beach (p413) in Queensland.

For rafting head to the upper Murray River (p240) and Coffs Harbour (p186) in NSW, the Tully River (p412) in north Queensland and the Franklin River (p690) in Tasmania.

Whale & Dolphin Watching

Southern right and humpback whales pass close to Australia's southern coast on their migratory route between the Antarctic and warmer waters. The best spots for whale-watching cruises are Eden (p238) in southern NSW, the midnorth coast of NSW (p90), Warrnambool (p537) and Mallacoota (p603) in Victoria, Albany (p925) on WA's southwest cape, and numerous places in SA (p705). Whale-watching season is roughly May to October on the west coast and in southwestern Victoria, September to November on the east coast, and June to September off the SA coast.

Dolphins can be seen year-round along the east coast at Jervis Bay (p233), Port Stephens (p165) and Byron Bay (p194), all in NSW; off the coast of WA at places like Bunbury (p909), Rockingham (p907), Esperance (p928) and Monkey Mia (p956).

Wildlife Watching

Wildlife is one of Australia's top selling points and justifiably so. The vast majority of national parks are home to native flora, although much of it is nocturnal so you may need to hone your flashlight skills to spot it.

Australia is a twitcher's haven, with a wide variety of habitats and bird life, particularly water birds. **Birds Australia** ([☎ 03-9882 2622; www.birdsaustralia.com.au](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au)) publishes the informative quarterly magazine *Wingspan*.

In the NT the best parks to spot wildlife are in the tropical north, particularly Kakadu (p819) where the birdlife in particular is brilliant and abundant. You've also got a good

chance of spotting crocs up here. See p792 for a rundown on wildlife watching in the state.

In NSW there are platypuses and gliders to be found in New England National Park (p210), and 120 bird species in Dorrigo National Park (p211). The Border Ranges National Park (p205) is home to a quarter of all of Australia's bird species. Willandra National Park (p253) is World Heritage-listed and encompasses dense temperate wetlands and wildlife. WA (p873) also has ample bird watching hotspots.

In Victoria, Wilsons Promontory National Park (p594) teems with wildlife – in fact, wombats seem to have right of way.

In SA make a beeline to Flinders Chase National Park (p743) and in Queensland hike around Magnetic Island (p403) in the north for superb koala spotting and Brisbane Forest Park (p305) in the south for bird watching. In Tasmania, Maria Island (p653) is another twitcher's paradise, and Mt William National Park (p660) teems with native fauna.

BUSINESS HOURS

Hours vary a little from state to state but most shops and businesses open about 9am and close at 5pm Monday to Friday, with Saturday hours usually from 9am to either noon or 5pm. Sunday trading is becoming increasingly common but is currently limited to major cities, urban areas and tourist towns. In most towns there are usually one or two late shopping nights a week, normally Thursday and/or Friday, when doors stay open until about 9pm. Most supermarkets are open till at least 8pm and are sometimes open 24 hours. Milk bars (general stores) and convenience stores are often open until late.

Banks are normally open from 9.30am to 4pm Monday to Thursday and until 5pm on Friday. Some large city branches are open from 8am to 6pm weekdays, and a few are also open until 9pm on Friday. Post offices are open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, but you can also buy stamps on Saturday morning at post office agencies (operated from news-agencies) and from Australia Post shops in all the major cities.

Restaurants typically open at noon for lunch and between 6pm and 7pm for dinner; most dinner bookings are made for 6.30pm to 8pm. See p69 for more information about restaurants, cafés, pubs and general dining hours.

Nearly all attractions across Australia are closed on Christmas Day, and many also close on New Years Day and Good Friday.

CHILDREN Practicalities

All cities and most major towns have centrally located public rooms where mothers (and sometimes fathers) can go to nurse their baby or change its nappy; check with the local tourist office or city council for details. While many Australians have a relaxed attitude about breast-feeding or nappy changing in public, some do frown on it.

Most motels and the better-equipped caravan parks have playgrounds and swimming pools, and can supply cots and baby baths – motels may also have in-house children's videos and child-minding services. Top-end hotels and many (but not all) midrange hotels are well versed in the needs of guests with children. B&Bs, on the other hand, often market themselves as sanctuaries from all things child related. Many cafés and restaurants lack a specialised children's menu, but many others do have kids' meals, or will provide small serves from the main menu. Some also supply highchairs.

If you want to leave Junior behind for a few hours, some of Australia's numerous licensed childcare agencies offer casual care. Check under 'Baby Sitters' and 'Child Care Centres' in the *Yellow Pages* telephone directory, or phone the local council for a list. Licensed centres are subject to government regulations and usually adhere to high standards; to be on the safe side, avoid unlicensed ones.

Child concessions (and family rates) often apply to accommodation, tours, admission fees, and transport, with some discounts as high as 50% of the adult rate. However, the definition of 'child' varies from under 12 to under 18 years. Accommodation concessions generally apply to children under 12 years sharing the same room as adults. On the major airlines, infants travel free provided they don't occupy a seat – child fares usually apply between the ages of two and 11 years.

Australia has high-standard medical services and facilities, and items such as baby formula and disposable nappies are widely available in urban and regional centres. Major hire-car companies will supply and fit booster seats, charging around \$18 for up to three days' use, with an additional daily fee for longer periods.

Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* contains plenty of useful information.

Sights & Activities

There's no shortage of active, interesting or amusing things for children to focus on in Australia. Plenty of museums, zoos, aquariums, interactive technology centres and pioneer villages have historical, natural or science-based exhibits to get kids thinking. And of course outdoor destinations are always a winner. This guide has hot tips for keeping kids occupied in Sydney (p114), Canberra (p275), Melbourne (p492), Darwin (p803), Adelaide (p717), Perth (p886), Brisbane (p310) and Hobart (p622).

Elsewhere, in Victoria Wilsons Promontory National Park (p594) is a favourite family haunt and keeps knee-biters occupied with bush walks, swimming, surfing and wildlife spotting. The Penguin Parade of Philip Island (p525) is also a must for families.

In NSW some companies specifically tailor outdoor pursuits for kids, like Kidz Klub (p195) in Byron Bay. Some surf schools in Byron (p197) run camps specifically for kids during school holidays. The free kids programme at the Newcastle Region Art Gallery (p156) is excellent for budding Renoirs, and the Newcastle Region Museum (p156) also has interactive science gadgets for little tackers.

In the NT you can take them wildlife spotting in Territory Wildlife Park (p816). Not quite as wild, but a family must nevertheless is the world-famous Australia Zoo (p341) in Queensland, the Alice Springs Desert Park (p839) in the NT and East Coast Nature World (p658) in Tasmania.

For synthetic but scintillating fun spend a day at the Gold Coast theme parks (p329) in Queensland.

CLIMATE CHARTS

Australia's size means there's a lot of climatic variation, but without severe extremes. The southern third of the country has cold (though generally not freezing) winters (June to August). Tasmania and the alpine country in Victoria and NSW get particularly chilly. Summers (December to February) are pleasant and warm, sometimes quite hot. Spring (September to November) and autumn (March to May) are transition months, much the same as in Europe and North America.

As you head north, the climate changes dramatically. Seasonal variations become fewer

until, in the far north, around Darwin and Cairns, you're in the monsoon belt with just two seasons: hot and wet, and hot and dry. The Dry lasts roughly from April to September, and the Wet from October to March; the build-up to the Wet (from early October) is when the humidity is at its highest and when the locals confess to being at their most irritable. The centre of the country is arid – hot and dry during the day, but often bitterly cold at night.

Climate change has had a tangible impact on the Australian landscape; see p58 for more information.

See When to Go, p22, for further information on Australia's seasons.

COURSES

While travelling in Australia, consider spending a few days or even weeks receiving expert training in some rewarding local activities. It's a good way of connecting with locals, deepening your appreciation of the Australian environment and culture, and increasing your bragging rights when you return home.

You can learn how to dive around the country, with open-water and shore diving courses available at coastal locations in nearly every state and territory. You could also learn how to stand up on a thin piece of fibreglass while it's sliding down the face of a wave by taking a surfing lesson or two. There are surf schools around the country, though the east coast has the greatest concentration.

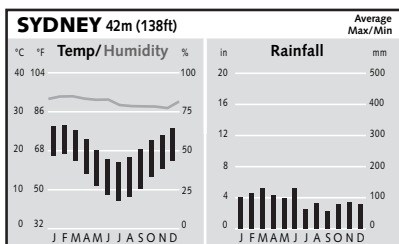
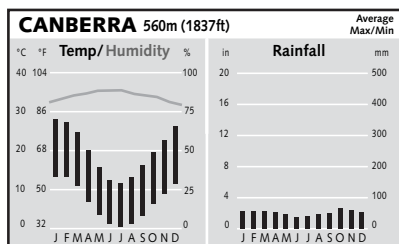
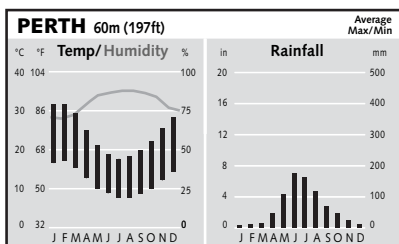
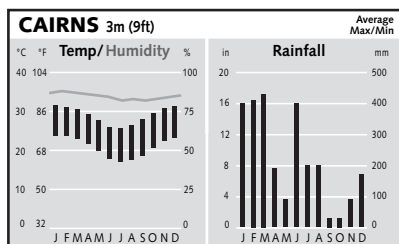
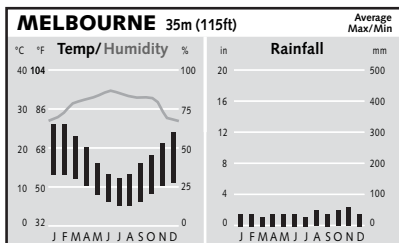
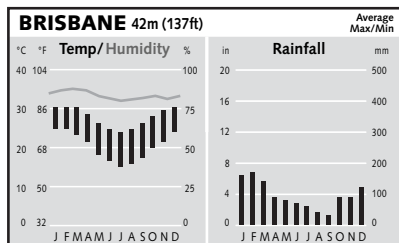
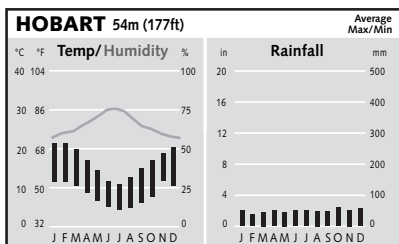
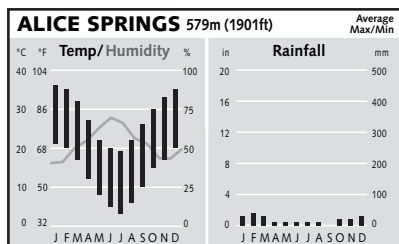
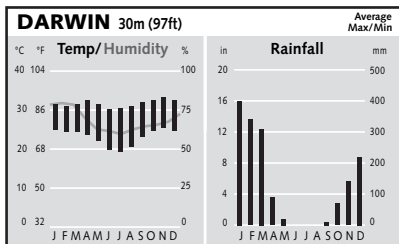
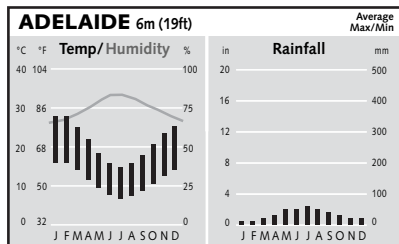
Well-fed cosmopolitan habitats like Melbourne and Sydney offer plenty of opportunities for you to learn how to cook up a storm by utilising the wonderful array of local produce and the skilled cookery of Australia's many imported ethnic cuisines. For more on cooking courses, see p71.

CUSTOMS & QUARANTINE

For information on customs regulations, contact the **Australian Customs Service** (☎ 1300 363 263, 02-6275 6666; www.customs.gov.au).

When entering Australia you can bring most articles in free of duty provided that customs is satisfied they are for personal use and that you'll be taking them with you when you leave. There's a duty-free quota per person of 2.25L of alcohol, 250 cigarettes and dutiable goods up to the value of \$900 (\$450 for people under 18).

When arriving or departing the country, you'll need to declare all animal and plant



EXPERIENCING ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA

Indigenous Australians have some of the most complex and ancient cultures in the world and gaining a deeper insight into some of them is one of the highlights of a visit to Australia. There are cultural centres, museums and festivals across the country that enable you to experience Aboriginal art, history, tradition, diversity and life. You can also take an indigenous tour and learn about the centuries-old relationship tribes have with the land, how to play a didgeridoo, throw a spear or recognise edible flora and natural medicines out in the bush.

There are ample opportunities to enjoy these experiences in the Top End, such as at the Northern Territory Aboriginal community of Manyallaluk (p828). In Queensland, Guurbi Tours (p456) is run by a Nugal-warra elder and The Basement and Indij-N-Arts (p307) are two excellent projects operated by Aboriginal artists in Brisbane. The Laura Festival (p463) is another excellent Aboriginal experience.

There are also opportunities in NSW, including the Muru Mittigar Aboriginal Cultural Centre (p148) near the Blue Mountains, the Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Keeping Place (p209) in Armidale, and the Umbarra Cultural Centre (p233) near Bermagui. In Victoria, the excellent Brambuk Cultural Centre (p547) in the Grampians National Park has cultural tours and courses. In SA, Adjahdura Land on the Yorke Peninsula (p763) runs highly-recommended Aboriginal cultural tours.

Individual chapters provide greater detail about Aboriginal experiences; see Aboriginal Festivals and Events (p791), and Indigenous Tours (p793) for options in the NT; Aboriginal NSW (p85), and Aboriginal Victoria (p473); Aboriginal Culture Tours (p874) in WA.

material (wooden spoons, straw hats, the lot) and show them to a quarantine officer. And if you lug in a souvenir, such as a drum with animal hide for a skin, or a wooden article (though these items are not strictly prohibited, they are subject to inspection) that shows signs of insect damage, it won't get through. Some items may require treatment to make them safe before they are allowed in. The authorities are naturally keen to protect Australia's unique environment and important agricultural industries by preventing weeds, pests or diseases from getting into the country. Food is also prohibited, particularly meat, cheese, fruit, vegetables and flowers; plus, there are restrictions on taking fruit and vegetables between states.

You also need to declare currency in excess of \$10,000 (including foreign currency) and all medicines. Before declaring firearms and ammunition (which is mandatory) you must obtain a Restricted Goods Permit from Australian Customs.

Unless you want to make a first-hand investigation of conditions in Australian jails, don't bring illegal drugs in with you. Customs authorities are adept at searching for them and those cute sniffer beagles are a permanent fixture in arrival and baggage halls.

Australia takes quarantine very seriously. All luggage is screened or X-rayed – if you fail to declare quarantine items on arrival and

are caught, you risk a hefty on-the-spot fine of up to \$220, or prosecution, which may result in much more significant fines and up to 10 years imprisonment. For more information on quarantine regulations contact the **Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service** (AQIS; ☎ 1800 020 504, 02-6272 3933; www.aqis.gov.au).

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Animal Hazards

Australia's profusion of dangerous creatures is legendary. Apart from the presence of poisonous snakes and spiders, the country has its share of shark and crocodile attacks and, to top it off, it's home to the world's deadliest creature, the box jellyfish (p372). Travellers don't need to be constantly alarmed, however – you're unlikely to see many of these creatures in the wild, much less be attacked by one. For some reassuring statistics, see the boxed text, p1002.

Hospitals have antivenin on hand for all common snake and spider bites, but it helps to know what it was that bit you.

BOX JELLYFISH

There have been numerous fatal encounters between swimmers and these large jellyfish on the northern coast. Also known as the sea wasp or 'stinger', their venomous tentacles can grow up to 3m long. You can be stung during any month, but the worst time is from

A BIT OF PERSPECTIVE

There's approximately one shark-attack fatality per year in Australia, and a similar number of croc-attack deaths. Every now and then the number increases slightly, but usually because people have become complacent about impinging on these creatures' territories. Blue-ringed octopus deaths are even rarer – only two in the last century – and there's only ever been one confirmed death from a cone shell. Jellyfish do better, disposing of about two people each year. However, you're still over 100 times more likely to drown than be killed by one of these creatures.

On land, snakes kill one or two people per year (about the same as bee stings, or less than one-thousandth of those killed on the roads). There hasn't been a recorded death from a tick bite for over 50 years, nor from spider bites in the last 20.

November to the end of April, when you should stay out of the water unless you're wearing protective clothing such as a 'stinger suit', available from swimwear and sporting shops in the stinger zone. The box jellyfish also has a tiny, lethal relative called an irukandji, though to date only one north-coast death has been directly attributed to it.

CROCODILES

In northern Australia, saltwater crocodiles ('salties') are a real danger. As well as living around the coast they can be found in estuaries, creeks and rivers, sometimes a long way inland. Observe safety signs or ask locals whether an inviting water hole or river is croc-free before plunging in – these precautions have been fatally ignored in the past.

INSECTS

For four to six months of the year you'll have to cope with the two banes of the Australian outdoors: the fly and the mosquito ('mozzie'). Flies aren't too bad in the cities but they start getting out of hand in the outback. In central Australia the flies emerge with the warmer spring weather (late August), particularly if there has been good winter rain, and last until the next frost kills them off. Flies also tend to be bad in various coastal areas. The humble fly net fits on a hat and is very effective (albeit utterly unfashionable). Widely available repellents, such as Aerogard and Rid, may also help to deter the little bastards, but don't count on it.

Mozzies are a problem in summer, especially near wetlands in tropical areas, and some species are carriers of viral infections; see p1054. Try to keep your arms and legs covered as soon as the sun goes down and make liberal use of insect repellent. For details of what ticks can get up to, see p1055.

SNAKES

There are many venomous snakes in the Australian bush, the most common being the brown and tiger snakes, but few are aggressive – unless you're interfering with one, or have the misfortune to stand on one, it's extremely unlikely that you'll be bitten. The golden rule if you see a snake is to do a Beatles and *let it be*.

For information on treating snake bites, see p1056.

SPIDERS

The deadly funnel-web spider is found in NSW (including Sydney) and its bite is treated in the same way as a snake bite. Another eight-legged critter to stay away from is black with a distinctive red stripe on its body. Called the redback spider for obvious reasons; if bitten apply ice and seek medical attention. The white tail is a long, thin black spider with, you guessed it, a white tail, and has a fierce bite that can lead to local inflammation and ulceration. The disturbingly large huntsman spider, which often enters homes, is harmless, though seeing one for the first time can affect your blood pressure and/or your underpants.

Bushfires & Blizzards

Bushfires are a regular occurrence in Australia, and in the 2006/07 summer they were particularly severe in Victoria, NSW, WA and Tasmania; see the box text, p578, for a bit of perspective. In hot, dry and windy weather, be extremely careful with any naked flame – cigarette butts thrown out of car windows have started many a fire. On a total fire ban day it's forbidden to use a camping stove, campfires or solid fuel barbecue and the penalties for doing so are severe. Given that people have lost their homes and worse to bushfires in rural Australia, locals will not be amused if

they catch you breaking this law, and they'll happily turn you in.

When a total fire ban is in place, bushwalkers should delay their trip until the weather improves. If you're out in the bush and you see smoke, even a long way away, take it seriously – bushfires move quickly and change direction with the wind. Go to the nearest open space, downhill if possible. A forested ridge, on the other hand, is the most dangerous place to be.

More bushwalkers actually die of cold than in bushfires. Even in summer temperatures can drop below freezing at night in the mountains and the weather can change very quickly. Blizzards in the mountains of Tasmania, Victoria and NSW can occur at almost any time of the year. Exposure in even moderately cool temperatures can sometimes result in hypothermia – for more information on hypothermia and how to minimise its risk, see p1056.

Crime

Australia is a relatively safe place to visit but you should still take reasonable precautions. Don't leave hotel rooms or cars unlocked, and don't leave your valuables unattended or visible through a car window. Sydney, the Gold Coast, Cairns and Byron Bay all get a dishonourable mention when it comes to theft, so keep a careful eye on your belongings in these areas.

Some pubs in Sydney and other major cities carry posted warnings about drugged drinks, after several reported cases in the past few years of women accepting a drink from a stranger only to later fall unconscious and be sexually assaulted. Women are advised to refuse drinks offered by strangers in bars and to drink bottled alcohol rather than from a glass.

Road Hazards

The roadkill that you unfortunately see a lot of in the outback and alongside roads in many other parts of the country is mostly the result of cars and trucks hitting animals at night. It's a huge problem in Australia, particularly in the NT, Queensland, NSW, SA and Tasmania. Many Australians avoid travelling altogether once the sun drops because of the risks posed by animals on the roads.

Kangaroos are common hazards on country roads, as are cows and sheep in the unfenced outback – hitting an animal of this size can make a real mess of your car. Kangaroos are most active around dawn and dusk. They

often travel in groups, so if you see one hopping across the road in front of you, slow right down, as its friends may be just behind it.

If you're travelling at night and a large animal appears in front of you, hit the brakes, dip your lights (so you don't continue to dazzle and confuse it) and only swerve if it's safe to do so – numerous travellers have been killed in accidents caused by swerving to miss animals.

If you hit an animal while driving pull it off the road. This prevents further injury to it from another car and also prevents the next car from having a potential accident. If the animal is only injured and is small, perhaps an orphaned joey (baby kangaroo), wrap it in a towel or blanket and call the relevant wildlife rescue line:

Fauna Rescue South Australia (☎ 08-8289 0896; www.fauanarrescue.org)

New South Wales Wildlife Information and Rescue Service (☎ 1800 641 188, 02-8977 3333; www.wires.org.au)

Northern Territory Wildlife Rescue Hotline Darwin (☎ 0409-090 840); Katherine (☎ 0407-934 252); Alice Springs (☎ 0419-221 128)

Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (☎ 1300 130 372; www.epa.qld.gov.au)

Tasmania Parks & Wildlife Service (☎ 1300 135 513, 03-6233 6556; www.parks.tas.gov.au)

Western Australia Department of Environment and Conservation (☎ 08-9474 9055, 08-9334 0333; www.calm.wa.gov.au)

Wildlife Victoria (☎ 0500-540 000; www.wildlife.victoria.org.au)

Another hazard is driver fatigue. Driving long distances (particularly in hot weather) can be so tiring that you might fall asleep at the wheel. It's not uncommon and the consequences can be unthinkable. So on a long haul, stop and rest every two hours or so – do some exercise, change drivers or have a coffee.

In the outback, if you plan on driving through pastoral stations and Aboriginal communities you must get permission first. This is actually for your safety; many international travellers have tackled this rugged landscape on their own and required complicated rescues after getting lost or breaking down.

Australian drivers are generally a courteous bunch, but risks can be posed by rural petrol heads, inner-city speedsters and, particularly, drunk drivers. Driving on dirt roads can also be tricky if you're not used to them. For more information on road conditions see p1033.

Swimming

Popular beaches are patrolled by surf life savers and patrolled areas are marked off by flags. Even so, surf beaches can be dangerous places to swim if you aren't used to the conditions. Undertows (or 'rips') are the main problem. If you find yourself being carried out by a rip, the important thing to do is just keep afloat; don't panic or try to swim against the rip, which will exhaust you. In most cases the current stops within a couple of hundred metres of the shore and you can then swim parallel to the shore for a short way to get out of the rip and make your way back to land.

A number of people are also paralysed every year by diving into waves in shallow water and hitting a sand bar; check the depth of the water before you leap.

DISABLED TRAVELLERS

Disability awareness in Australia is pretty high and getting higher. Legislation requires that new accommodation meets accessibility standards for mobility-impaired travellers, and discrimination by tourism operators is illegal. Many of Australia's key attractions, including many national parks, provide access for those with limited mobility and a number of sites also address the needs of visitors with visual or aural impairments; contact attractions in advance to confirm the facilities. Tour operators with accessible vehicles catering to mobility-impaired travellers operate from most capital cities. Facilities for wheelchairs are improving in accommodation, but there are still far too many older (particularly 'historic') establishments where the necessary upgrades haven't been done.

DISCOUNT CARDS

Senior Cards

Senior travellers with some form of identification are often eligible for concession prices. Overseas pensioners are entitled to discounts of at least 10% on most express bus fares with Greyhound. Travellers over 60 years of age (both Australian residents and visitors) will simply need to present current age-proving identification to be eligible for discounts on full economy air fares.

Student & Youth Cards

The **International Student Travel Confederation** (ISTC; www.istc.org) is an international collective of specialist student travel organisations. It's

also the body behind the internationally recognised **International Student Identity Card** (ISIC), which is only issued to full-time students aged 12 years and over, and gives the bearer discounts on accommodation, transport and admission to various attractions. The ISTC also produces the **International Youth Travel Card** (IYTC or Go25), which is issued to people who are between 12 and 26 years of age and not fulltime students, and has benefits equivalent to the ISIC. A similar ISTC brainchild is the **International Teacher Identity Card** (ITIC), available to teaching professionals. All three cards are chiefly available from student travel companies.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Australian Embassies & Consulates

The website of the **Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade** (www.dfat.gov.au) provides a full listing of all Australian diplomatic missions overseas.

Canada (☎ 613-236 0841; www.ahc-ottawa.org; Suite 710, 50 O'Connor St, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6L2) Also in Vancouver and Toronto.

France (☎ 01-40 59 33 00; www.france.embassy.gov.au; 4 rue Jean Rey 75724 Cedex 15, Paris)

Germany (☎ 030-880 08 80; www.germany.embassy.gov.au; Wallstrasse 76-79, Berlin 10179) Also in Frankfurt.

Indonesia (☎ 0212 550 5555; www.indonesia.embassy.gov.au; Jalan HR Rasuna Said Kav C15-16, Jakarta Selatan 12940) Also in Medan (Sumatra) and Denpasar (Bali).

Ireland (☎ 01-664 5300; www.ireland.embassy.gov.au; 7th fl, Fitzwilton House, Wilton Tce, Dublin 2)

Japan (☎ 0352 324 111; www.australia.or.jp/english; 2-1-14 Mita, Minato-Ku, Tokyo 108-8361) Also in Osaka, Nagoya, Sendai, Sapporo and Fukuoka City.

Malaysia (☎ 03-2146 5555; www.malaysia.embassy.gov.au; 6 Jalan Yap Kwan Seng, Kuala Lumpur 50450) Also in Penang, Kuching (Sarawak) and Kota Kinabalu (Sabah).

Netherlands (☎ 070 310 8200; www.netherlands.embassy.gov.au; Carnegieplein 4, The Hague 2517 KH)

New Zealand Wellington (☎ 04-473 6411; www.newzealand.embassy.gov.au; 72-76 Hobson St, Thorndon, Wellington); Auckland (☎ 09-921 8800; Level 7, Price Waterhouse Coopers Bldg, 186-194 Quay St, Auckland)

Singapore (☎ 6836 4100; www.singapore.embassy.gov.au; 25 Napier Rd, Singapore 258507)

South Africa (☎ 12-423 6000; www.southafrica.embassy.gov.au; 292 Orient Street, Arcadia, Pretoria 0083) Also in Johannesburg.

Thailand (☎ 02 344 6300; www.thailand.embassy.gov.au; 37 South Sathorn Rd, Bangkok 10120)

UK (☎ 020-7379 4334; www.uk.embassy.gov.au; Australia House, The Strand, London WC2B 4LA) Also in Edinburgh.

USA (☎ 202-797 3000; www.usaembassy.gov.au; 1601 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20036-2273) Also in Los Angeles, New York and other major cities.

Embassies & Consulates in Australia

The main diplomatic representations are in Canberra. There are also representatives in other major cities, particularly from countries with a strong link to Australia, such as the USA, the UK or New Zealand, or in cities with important connections, such as Darwin, which has an Indonesian consulate.

Addresses of major offices include the following. Look in the *Yellow Pages* phone

directories of the capital cities for a more complete listing.

Canada Canberra (Map p268; ☎ 02-6270 4000; www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/australia; Commonwealth Ave, Canberra, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp94-5; ☎ 02-9364 3000; Level 5, 111 Harrington St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

France Canberra (Map p268; ☎ 02-6216 0100; www.ambafrance-au.org; 6 Perth Ave, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp94-5; ☎ 02-9261 5779; www.consulfrance-sydney.org; Level 26, St Martins Tower, 31 Market St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

Germany Canberra (Map p268; ☎ 02-6270 1911; www.germanembassy.org.au; 119 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp92-3; ☎ 02-9328 7733; 13 Trelawney St, Woollahra, NSW 2025); Melbourne (Map pp476-7; ☎ 03-9864 6888; 480 Punt Rd, South Yarra, Vic 3141)

AUSTRALIA FOR THE TRAVELLER WITH A DISABILITY

Information

Reliable information is the key ingredient for travellers with a disability and the best source is the **National Information Communication and Awareness Network** (Nican; ☎ /TTY 02-6285 3713, TTY 1800 806 769; www.nican.com.au; 4/2 Phipps Cl, Deakin, ACT 2600). It's an Australia-wide directory providing information on access issues, accessible accommodation, sporting and recreational activities, transport and specialist tour operators.

The website of **Tourism Australia** (www.australia.com) publishes detailed, downloadable information for people with disabilities – look under 'Plan Your Trip'.

Another source of quality information is the **Disability Information & Resource Centre** (DIRC; Map p710; ☎ 08-8236 0555, TTY 08-8223 7579; www.dirca.org.au; 195 Gilles St, Adelaide, SA 5000). The website of **e-bility** (www.e-bility.com/travel/) provides lots of info on accessible holidays in Australia, including listings of tour operators and accommodation.

The publication **Easy Access Australia** (www.easyaccessaustralia.com.au), by Bruce Cameron, is available from various bookshops and provides details on easily accessible transport, accommodation and attraction options.

The comprehensive website www.toiletmap.gov.au lists over 14,000 public and private toilets, including those with wheelchair access.

Blind Citizens Australia (☎ 1800 033 660, 03-9372 6400, TTY 03-9376 9275; www.bca.org.au) provides useful information for the visually impaired.

Air

Accepted only by Qantas, **Community Fares** (☎ 13 13 13, TTY 1800 652 660; www.qantas.com.au), entitles a disabled person and the carer travelling with them to a 10% discount on full economy fares; call Nican (see above) for eligibility and an application form. Guide dogs travel for free on **Qantas** (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au), **Jetstar** (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com.au) and **Virgin Blue** (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au), and their affiliated carriers. All of Australia's major airports have dedicated parking spaces, wheelchair access to terminals, accessible toilets, and skychairs to convey passengers onto planes via airbridges.

Train

In NSW, CountryLink's XPT trains have at least one carriage (usually the buffet car) with a seat removed for a wheelchair, and an accessible toilet. Queensland Rail's *Tilt Train* from Brisbane to Cairns has a wheelchair-accessible carriage.

Melbourne's suburban rail network is accessible and guide dogs and hearing dogs are permitted on all public transport in Victoria. **Metlink** (☎ 13 16 38; www.metlinkmelbourne.com.au) also offers a free travel pass to visually impaired people for transport in Melbourne.

Ireland Canberra (Map p268; ☎ 02-6273 3022; irishemb@cyberone.com.au; 20 Arkana St, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp94-5; ☎ 02-9231 6999; Level 30, 400 George St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

Japan Canberra (Map p268; ☎ 02-6273 3244; www.japan.org.au; 112 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp94-5; ☎ 02-9231 3455; Level 34, Colonial Centre, 52 Martin Pl, Sydney, NSW 2000)

Malaysia Sydney (Map pp92-3; ☎ 02-9327 7596; 67 Victoria Rd, Bellevue Hill, NSW 2023)

Netherlands Canberra (Map p268; ☎ 02-6220 9400; www.netherlands.org.au; 120 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp92-3; ☎ 02-9387 6644; Level 23, Tower 2, 101 Grafton St, Bondi Junction, NSW 2022)

New Zealand Canberra (Map p268; ☎ 02-6270 4211; www.nzembassy.com/australia; Commonwealth Ave, Canberra, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp94-5; ☎ 02-8256 2000; Level 10, 55 Hunter St, Sydney, NSW 2001)

Singapore Canberra (Map p268; ☎ 02-6271 2000; www.mfa.gov.sg/canberra; 17 Forster Cres, Yarralumla, ACT 2600)

South Africa Canberra (Map p268; ☎ 02-6272 7300; www.sahc.org.au; cnr Rhodes Pl & State Circle, Yarralumla, Canberra, ACT 2600)

Thailand Canberra (Map p268; ☎ 02-6273 1149; www.thaiembassy.org.au; 111 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp94-5; ☎ 02-9241 2542; http://thai.sydney.idx.com.au; Level 8, 131 Macquarie St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

UK Canberra (Map p268; ☎ 02-6270 6666; www.britaus.net; Commonwealth Ave, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp94-5; ☎ 02-9247 7521; 16th fl, 1 Macquarie Pl, Sydney, NSW 2000); Melbourne (Map pp478-9; ☎ 03-9652 1600; 11th fl, 90 Collins St, Melbourne, Vic 3000)

USA Canberra (Map p268; ☎ 02-6214 5600; http://usembas-sy-australia.state.gov; 21 Moonah Pl, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp94-5; ☎ 02-9373 9200; Level 59, 19-29 Martin Pl, Sydney, NSW 2000); Melbourne (Map pp476-7; ☎ 03-9526 5900; Level 6, 553 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne, Vic 3004)

It's important to realise what your own embassy – the embassy of the country of which you are a citizen – can and can't do to help you if you get into trouble. Generally speaking, it won't be much help in emergencies if the trouble you're in is even remotely your own fault. Remember that while in Australia you are bound by Australian laws. Your embassy will not be sympathetic if you end up in jail after committing a crime locally, even if such actions are legal in your own country.

In genuine emergencies you might get some assistance, but only if other channels have been exhausted. For example, if you need to get home urgently, a free ticket is exceed-

ingly unlikely – the embassy would expect you to have insurance. If you have all your money and documents stolen, it might assist with getting a new passport, but a loan for onward travel is out of the question.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Some of the most enjoyable Australian festivals are also the most typically Australian – like the surf life-saving competitions on beaches all around the country during summer, or outdoor race meetings, which draw together isolated communities. There are also big city-based street festivals, sporting events and arts festivals that showcase comedy, music and dance, and some important commemorative get-togethers.

Details of festivals and events that are grounded in a single place – be it a city, town, valley or reserve – are provided throughout the destination chapters of this book. The following events are pursued throughout a particular region or state, or even around the country.

January & February

Big Day Out (www.bigdayout.com) This huge open-air music concert tours Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and the Gold Coast, and attracts big-name international acts and dozens of local bands and DJs.

Australia Day This national holiday, commemorating the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, is observed on 26 January.

Tropfest (www.tropfest.com.au) The world's largest short-film festival is held in Sydney, but is broadcast throughout the country.

March & April

Ten Days on the Island (www.tendaysontheisland.org) Major biennial Tasmanian cultural festival. Held in odd-numbered years in venues around the state.

Targa Tasmania (www.targa.org.au) Six-day rally for exotic cars that runs around the entire state, appropriating 2000km of roads as it goes.

Womadelaide (www.womadelaide.com.au) Annual festival of world music, arts and dance, held over three days in Adelaide and attracting crowds from around the country.

Anzac Day National holiday held on April 25, commemorating the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (Anzacs) who have served, and are serving for their countries. Dawn services and marches take place around the country.

May

Sorry Day (www.journeyofhealing.com) On 26 May each year (the anniversary of the tabling in 1997 of the *Bringing Them Home* report), concerned Australians acknowledge

the continuing pain and suffering of indigenous Australians affected by Australia's one-time child-removal practices and policies. Events are held in most cities countrywide.

July

Naidoc Week (www.naidoc.org.au) Communities across Australia celebrate the National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration (inaugurated in 1957), from local street festivals to the annual Naidoc Ball (held in a different location each year).

November

Melbourne Cup On the first Tuesday in November, Australia's premier horse race is run in Melbourne. Many country towns schedule racing events to coincide with the day and the nation does actually stop for the big race.

December

Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race (http://rolexsydneyhobart.com) Sydney Harbour is a fantastic sight as hundreds of boats farewell competitors in the gruelling Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race.

FOOD

Australia is not renowned for having a unique cuisine, but many people are surprised by the range and wealth of food available in restaurants, markets, delicatessens (delis) and cafés, especially in the major cities. The case will be the same in well-tourist areas but in regional areas the variety diminishes with the population.

Vegetarian eateries and vegetarian selections in non-vegie places (including menu choices for vegans and coeliac sufferers) are becoming more common in large cities and are forging a stronger presence in the smaller towns visited by tourists, though rural Australia – as exemplified by pub grub – continues its stolid dedication to meat. Those who enjoy a pre- or post-digestive puff will need to go outside, as smoking has been made illegal in most enclosed public places in all Australian states and territories, including indoor cafés, restaurants, clubs and (sometimes only at meal time) pub dining areas.

When it comes to cities, the eating recommendations provided in this book are often broken down into the main food-infatuated areas or suburbs and listed in order of price. The innovative food offered in top-quality Australian eateries doesn't necessarily cost a fortune. Best value are the modern cafés where you can get a good meal in casual surroundings for under \$20.

It's common but by no means obligatory to tip in restaurants and upmarket cafés if the service warrants it – a gratuity of between 10% and 15% of the bill is the norm.

See p64 for more comprehensive information on Australian cuisine and where best to enjoy it.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Australia is a popular destination for gay and lesbian travellers, with the so-called 'pink tourism' appeal of Sydney especially big, thanks largely to the city's annual, high-profile and spectacular Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras. Throughout the country, but particularly on the east coast, there are tour operators, travel agents and accommodation places that make a point of welcoming gay men and lesbians.

Certain regions are the focus of the gay and lesbian communities, among them Cairns (p421) and Noosa (p344) in Queensland; Oxford St and King's Cross in Sydney (see the boxed text, p118); the Blue Mountains (p145), Hunter Valley (p160) and the south coast in NSW; the Melbourne suburbs of Prahran, St Kilda and Collingwood (see the boxed text, p496); Daylesford and Hepburn Springs (p566) in Victoria; and Perth (p875) in WA.

Major gay and lesbian events include the aforementioned **Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras** (www.mardigras.org.au) held annually in February and March, Melbourne's **Midsumma Festival** (www.midsumma.org.au) from mid-January to mid-February, and Adelaide's **Feast** (www.feast.org.au) held in November.

In general Australians are open minded about homosexuality, but the further into the country you get, the more likely you are to run into overt homophobia. Having said that, you will find active gay communities in places like Alice Springs and Darwin. Even Tasmania, once a bastion of sexual conservatism, now actively encourages gay and lesbian tourism. Homosexual acts are legal in all states but the age of consent between males varies: in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Victoria, NSW, NT and WA it's 16 years; in SA and Tasmania it's 17; and in Queensland it's 18.

Publications & Contacts

All major cities have gay newspapers, available from gay and lesbian venues and from newsagents in popular gay and lesbian residential areas. Gay lifestyle magazines include *DNA*,

Lesbians on the Loose, Women Out West, the monthly *Queensland Pride* and the bimonthly *Blue*. Perth has the free *OutinPerth* and Adelaide has *Blaze*.

The website of **Gay and Lesbian Tourism Australia** (Galta; www.galta.com.au) has general information. Other helpful websites include **Queer Australia** (www.queeraustralia.com.au) and the Sydney-based **Pinkboard** (www.pinkboard.com.au). **Gay and Lesbian Counselling and Community Services of Australia** (GLCCS; www.glccs.org.au) telephone counselling services are often a useful source of general information. It has a switchboard in every capital city and toll-free numbers for rural areas.

HOLIDAYS

Public Holidays

The following is a list of the main national and state public holidays (* indicates holidays that are only observed locally). As the timing can vary from state to state, check locally for precise dates.

National

New Year's Day 1 January

Australia Day 26 January

Easter (Good Friday to Easter Monday inclusive) March/April

Anzac Day 25 April

Queen's Birthday (except WA) Second Monday in June

Queen's Birthday (WA) Last Monday in September

Christmas Day 25 December

Boxing Day 26 December

Australian Capital Territory

Canberra Day March

Bank Holiday First Monday in August

Labour Day First Monday in October

New South Wales

Bank Holiday First Monday in August

Labour Day First Monday in October

Northern Territory

May Day First Monday in May

Show Day (Alice Springs) First Friday in July; (Tennant Creek) Second Friday in July; (Katherine) Third Friday in July*; (Darwin) Fourth Friday in July*

Picnic Day First Monday in August

Queensland

Labour Day First Monday in May

RNA Show Day (Brisbane) August

South Australia

Adelaide Cup Day Third Monday in May

Labour Day First Monday in October

Proclamation Day Last Tuesday in December

Tasmania

Regatta Day 14 February

Launceston Cup Day February

Eight Hours Day First Monday in March

Bank Holiday Tuesday following Easter Monday

King Island Show March

Launceston Show Day October

Hobart Show Day October

Recreation Day (northern Tasmania only) First Monday in November

Victoria

Labour Day Second Monday in March

Melbourne Cup Day First Tuesday in November

Western Australia

Labour Day First Monday in March

Foundation Day First Monday in June

School Holidays

The Christmas holiday season, from mid-December to late January, is part of the summer school holidays – it's also the time you are most likely to find transport and accommodation booked out, and long, restless queues at tourist attractions. There are three shorter school holiday periods during the year, but they vary by a week or two from state to state. They fall roughly from early to mid-April, late June to mid-July, and late September to early October. Even though they don't coincide nationwide, accommodation in tourist hotspots like the north and south coasts of NSW and Queensland's Gold and Sunshine Coasts will still be booked out.

INSURANCE

Don't underestimate the importance of a good travel insurance policy that covers theft, loss and medical problems – nothing is guaranteed to ruin your holiday plans quicker than an accident or having that brand new digital camera stolen. Most policies offer lower and higher medical-expense options; the higher ones are chiefly for countries that have extremely high medical costs, such as the USA. There is a wide variety of policies available, so compare the small print.

Some policies specifically exclude designated 'dangerous activities' such as scuba

diving, bungee jumping, motorcycling, skiing and even bushwalking. If you plan on doing any of these things, make sure the policy you choose fully covers you for your activity of choice.

You may prefer a policy that pays doctors or hospitals directly rather than requiring you to pay on the spot and claim later. If you have to claim later make sure you keep all documentation. Check that the policy covers ambulances and emergency medical evacuations by air.

See also *Before You Go* (p1036) for details on health insurance. For information on insurance matters relating to cars that are bought or rented, see p1031.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet addicts will find it fairly easy to get connected throughout Australia.

Internet Cafés

Most internet cafés in Australia now have broadband access, but prices vary significantly depending on where you are. Most public libraries also have internet access, but this is provided primarily for research needs, not for travellers to check their email, so head for an internet café first. You'll find these in cities, sizable towns and pretty much anywhere else that travellers congregate. The cost ranges from \$3 per hour in cut-throat places in Sydney's King's Cross to \$10 per hour in more remote locations. The average is about \$6 per hour, usually with a minimum of 10 minutes' access. Most youth hostels and backpacker places can hook you up, as can many hotels and caravan parks. Telecentres (community centres providing web access and other hi-tech facilities to locals and visitors) provide internet access in remote areas of WA, SA and NSW, while Tasmania has set up access centres in numerous local libraries and schools.

Hooking Up

If you've brought your palmtop or notebook computer and want to get connected to a local ISP (Internet Service Provider), there are plenty of options – some ISPs do limit their dial-up areas to major cities or particular regions. Whatever enticements a particular ISP offers, make sure it has local dial-up numbers for the places where you intend to use it – the last thing you want is to be making timed STD calls every time you connect to

the internet. Another useful tip when dialling up from a hotel room is to put 0 in front of your dial-up number to enable your modem to dial an outside line.

Some major ISPs:

Australia On Line (☎ 1300 650 661; www.ozonline.com.au)

Dodo (☎ 13 24 73; www.dodo.com.au)

iinet (☎ 13 19 17; www.iinet.net.au)

iPrimus (☎ 1300 850 000; www.iprimus.com.au)

Optus (☎ 13 3345; www.optus.com.au)

Telstra BigPond (☎ 13 12 82; www.bigpond.com)

An increasing number of hotels, cafés and bars in cities offer wireless access. Some charge a fee so make sure you ask the price before connecting.

Australia uses RJ-45 telephone plugs and Telstra EXI-160 four-pin plugs, but neither is universal – electronics shops such as Tandy and Dick Smith should be able to help. You'll also need a plug adaptor, and a universal AC adaptor will enable you to plug in without frying the innards of your machine.

Keep in mind that your PC-card modem may not work in Australia. The safest option is to buy a reputable 'global' modem before you leave home or buy a local PC-card modem once you get to Australia.

For a list of useful Australia-savvy websites, see p25.

LEGAL MATTERS

Most travellers will have no contact with the Australian police or any other part of the legal system. Those that do are likely to experience it while driving. There is a significant police presence on the country's roads, with the power to stop your car and ask to see your licence (you're required to carry it at all times), check your vehicle for roadworthiness, and insist that you take a breath test for alcohol – needless to say, drink-driving offences are taken very seriously here.

First offenders caught with small amounts of illegal drugs are likely to receive a fine rather than go to jail; nonetheless the recording of a conviction against you may affect your visa status. If you remain in Australia beyond the life of your visa, you will officially be an 'overstayer' and could face detention and expulsion, and then be prevented from returning to Australia for up to three years.

If you are arrested, it's your right to telephone a friend, relative or lawyer before any

formal questioning begins. Legal Aid is available only in serious cases and only to the truly needy (for links to Legal Aid offices see www.nla.aust.net.au). However, many solicitors do not charge for an initial consultation.

MAPS

Good-quality road and topographical maps are plentiful. The various state motoring organisations are a dependable source of road maps, while local tourist offices usually supply free maps, though the quality varies.

Authors on this book got off the beaten track and scrutinised their maps. Lonely Planet also publishes handy fold-out city maps of Sydney and Melbourne. City street guides, such as those produced by Ausway (publishers of *Melway* and *Sydney*), Gregorys and UBD are useful for in-depth urban navigation, but they're expensive, bulky and only worth getting if you intend to do a lot of city driving. A useful website for locating urban points of interest is www.whereis.com.au.

Bushwalkers and others undertaking outdoor activities for which large-scale maps are essential should browse the topographic sheets published by **Geoscience Australia** (☎ 1800 800 173, 02-6249 9111; www.ga.gov.au). The more popular sheets are usually available over the counter at shops selling specialist bushwalking gear and outdoor equipment.

MONEY

ATMs, Eftpos & Bank Accounts

Branches of the ANZ, Commonwealth, National, Westpac and affiliated banks are found all over Australia, and many provide 24-hour automated teller machines (ATMs). But don't expect to find ATMs *everywhere*, certainly not off the beaten track or in very small towns. Most ATMs accept cards issued by other banks and are linked to international networks.

Eftpos (Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale) is a convenient service that many Australian businesses have embraced. It means you can use your bank card (credit or debit) to pay for services or purchases directly, and often withdraw cash as well. Eftpos is available practically everywhere these days, even in outback roadhouses where it's a long way between banks. Just like an ATM, you need to know your Personal Identification Number (PIN) to use it.

OPENING A BANK ACCOUNT

If you're planning on staying in Australia a while (on a Working Holiday Maker visa for instance) it makes sense to open up a local bank account. This is easy enough for overseas visitors provided it's done within six weeks of arrival. Simply present your passport and provide the bank with a postal address and they'll open the account and send you an ATM card.

After six weeks it's much more complicated. A points system operates and you need to score a minimum of 100 points before you can have the privilege of letting the bank take your money. Passports or birth certificates are worth 70 points; an international driving licence with photo earns you 40 points; and minor IDs, such as credit cards, get you 25 points. You must have at least one ID with a photograph. Once the account is open, you should be able to have money transferred across from your home account (for a fee, of course).

Some financial institutions offer travellers the option of setting up an Australian bank account with them before embarking on an international trip. For one example of this, see the details of Citibank's 'Traveller Account' on its website (www.citibank.com.au/tnt).

If you don't have an Australian Tax File Number (TFN), interest earned from your funds will be taxed at a rate of up to 47%. See p1018 for tax-related information.

Credit & Debit Cards

Arguably the best way to carry most of your money around is in the form of a plastic card. Australia is well and truly a card-carrying society; it's becoming unusual to line up at a supermarket checkout, petrol station or department store and see someone actually paying with cash these days. Credit cards such as Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted for everything from a hotel bed or a restaurant meal to an adventure tour, and are pretty much essential (in lieu of a large deposit) for hiring a car. They can also be used to get cash advances over the counter at banks and from many ATMs, depending on the card, though these transactions incur immediate interest. Charge cards such as Diners Club and American Express (Amex) are not as widely accepted.

The obvious danger with credit cards is maxing out your limit and going home to a steaming pile of debt and interest charges.

A safer option is a debit card with which you can draw money directly from your home bank account using ATMs, banks or Eftpos devices. Any card connected to the international banking network (Cirrus, Maestro, Plus and Eurocard) should work, provided you know your PIN. Fees for using your card at a foreign bank or ATM vary depending on your home bank; ask before you leave.

The most flexible option is to carry both a credit and a debit card.

Currency

Australia's currency is the Australian dollar, made up of 100 cents. There are 5c, 10c, 20c, 50c, \$1 and \$2 coins, and \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 notes. Although the smallest coin in circulation is 5c, prices are often still marked in single cents and then rounded to the nearest 5c when you come to pay.

Cash amounts equal to or in excess of the equivalent of A\$10,000 (in any currency) must be declared on arrival or departure.

In this book, unless otherwise stated, all prices given in dollars refer to Australian dollars. For an idea of local costs, see p22.

Exchanging Money

Changing foreign currency or travellers cheques is usually no problem at banks throughout Australia or at licensed money-changers such as Travelex or Amex in cities and major towns.

Taxes & Refunds

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) is a flat 10% tax on all goods and services – accommodation, eating out, transport, electrical and other goods, books, furniture, clothing etc. There are exceptions, however, such as basic foods (milk, bread, fruits and vegetables etc). By law the tax is included in the quoted or shelf prices, so all prices in this book are GST-inclusive. International air and sea travel to/from Australia is GST-free, as is domestic air travel when purchased outside Australia by nonresidents.

If you purchase new or secondhand goods with a total minimum value of \$300 from any one supplier no more than 30 days before you leave Australia, you are entitled under the Tourist Refund Scheme (TRS) to a refund of any GST or WET (wine equalisation tax) paid. The scheme doesn't apply to all goods, and those that do qualify you must be able to

wear or take as hand luggage onto the plane or ship. Also note that the refund is valid for goods bought from more than one supplier, but only if at least \$300 is spent in each. For more details, contact the **Australian Customs Service** (☎ 1300 363 263, 02-6275 6666; www.customs.gov.au).

See p1018 for details on income tax refunds.

Travellers Cheques

The ubiquity and convenience of internationally linked credit and debit card facilities in Australia means that travellers cheques are not heavily relied upon. Nevertheless, Amex, and other well-known international brands of travellers cheques are easily exchanged. You need to present your passport for identification when cashing travellers cheques.

There are no notable restrictions on importing or exporting travellers cheques.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

Digital cameras, memory sticks and batteries are sold prolifically in cities and urban centres. Electronic stores like Dick Smith will stock everything you need, as will the larger departments stores. The availability of batteries and memory sticks in more rural or remote areas is far diminished so if you're planning to get trigger happy it's best to stock up in the cities. Many internet cafés, camera stores and large stationers like **Officeworks** (www.officeworks.com.au) have facilities that enable you to produce prints directly from your memory stick or to burn CDs.

Film and slide film are still widely available and developing standards are high. You can get your shots processed at any camera store and just about any chemist. Video cassettes are widely available at camera and electronics stores.

As in any country, politeness goes a long way when taking photographs; ask before taking pictures of people. Aborigines generally do not like to have their photographs taken, even from a distance.

Useful Lonely Planet titles for the budding photographer include *Urban Travel Photography*, *Wildlife Travel Photography*, and *Landscape Photography*.

POST

Australia Post (www.auspost.com.au) has divided international destinations into four parcel zones. You can send parcels by sea mail to anywhere in the world except countries in the

Asia/Pacific region (including New Zealand); it's cheap but they can take forever.

Sending & Receiving Mail

All post offices hold mail for visitors. You need to provide some form of identification (such as a passport) to collect mail. You can also have mail sent to you at city Amex offices if you have an Amex card or travellers cheques.

See p998 for post office opening times.

SHOPPING

Australians are fond of spending money, a fact evidenced by the huge variety of local- and international-brand shops, and the feverish crowds that gather at every clearance sale. Big cities can satisfy most consumer appetites with everything from high-fashion boutiques to secondhand emporiums, while many smaller places tend towards speciality retail, be it home-grown produce, antiques or arts and crafts. Markets are a great place to shop and most cities have at least one permanent bazaar.

You may be able to get a refund on the tax you pay on goods; see p1011.

Aboriginal Art & Artefacts

An Aboriginal artwork or artefact makes an evocative reminder of your trip. By buying authentic items you are supporting Aboriginal culture and helping to ensure that traditional and contemporary expertise and designs continue to be of economic and cultural benefit for Aboriginal individuals and their communities. Unfortunately, much of the so-called Aboriginal art sold as souvenirs is ripped off, consisting of appropriated designs illegally taken from Aboriginal people; or it's just plain fake, and usually made overseas by underpaid workers.

The best place to buy artefacts is either directly from the communities that have art-and-craft centres or from galleries and outlets that are owned, operated or supported by Aboriginal communities. There are also many reputable galleries that have long supported the Aboriginal arts industry, usually members of the **Australian Commercial Galleries Association** (ACGA; www.acga.com.au), and that will offer certificates of authenticity with their goods.

Didgeridoos are in high demand, but you should decide whether you want a decorative piece or a functional musical instrument.

The didgeridoos on the market are not always made by Aboriginal people, which means that at a non-supportive souvenir shop in Darwin or Cairns you could pay anything from \$250 to \$400 or more for something that looks pretty but is little more than a painted bit of wood. From a community outlet such as Man-yallaluk (p828) in the NT, however, you could expect to pay \$200 to \$350 for a functional, authentic didgeridoo painted with natural pigments such as ochre.

Australiana

The cheapest souvenirs, usually mass produced and with little to distinguish them, are known collectively by the euphemism 'Australiana'. They are supposedly representative of Australia and its culture, but in reality are just lowest-common-denominator trinkets, often made in Asia rather than Australia (check the label).

Genuine Australian offerings include the seeds of native plants – try growing kangaroo paws back home (if your own country will allow them in). You could also consider a bottle of fine Australian wine, honey (leatherwood honey is one of many powerful local varieties), macadamia nuts (native to Queensland) or Bundaberg Rum, with its unusual sweet flavour.

Opals & Gemstones

The opal, Australia's national gemstone, is a popular souvenir, as is the jewellery made with it. It's a beautiful stone but buy wisely and shop around, as quality and prices vary widely from place to place. Coober Pedy (p781) in SA and Lightning Ridge (p223) and White Cliffs (p257) in NSW are opal-mining towns where you can buy the stones or fossick for your own.

On the Torres Strait Islands (p465) look out for South Sea pearls, while in Broome (p980) in WA, cultured pearls are sold in many local shops.

Australia is a mineral-rich country and semiprecious gemstones such as topaz, garnets, sapphires, rubies, zircon and others can sometimes be found lying around in piles of dirt at various locations. The gem fields around Emerald, Anakie and Rubyvale in Queensland's Capricorn Hinterland (p374) are a good place to shop for jewellery and gemstones, and there are sites around rural and outback Australia where you can pay a few dollars and fossick for your own stones.

On Flinders Island (p699), Killiecrankie 'diamonds' (actually topaz) are the stone of choice.

TELEPHONE

The two main telecommunication companies are **Telstra** (www.telstra.com.au) and **Optus** (www.optus.com.au). Both are also major players in the mobile (cell) market, along with **Vodafone** (www.vodafone.com.au) – other mobile operators include **Virgin** (www.virginmobile.com.au) and **3** (www.three.com.au).

Information & Toll-free Calls

Numbers starting with ☎ 190 are usually recorded information services, charged at anything from 35c to \$5 or more per minute (more from mobiles and payphones). To make a reverse-charge (collect) call from any public or private phone, dial ☎ 1800 REVERSE (☎ 1800 738 3773), or ☎ 12 550.

Toll-free numbers (prefix ☎ 1800) can be called free of charge from almost anywhere in Australia – they may not be accessible from certain areas or from mobile phones. Calls to numbers beginning with ☎ 13 or ☎ 1300 are charged at the rate of a local call – the numbers can usually be dialled Australia-wide, but may be applicable only to a specific state or STD district. Telephone numbers beginning with either ☎ 1800, ☎ 13 or ☎ 1300 cannot be dialled from outside Australia.

International Calls

Most payphones allow ISD (International Subscriber Dialling) calls, the cost and international dialling code of which will vary depending on which provider you are using. International calls from Australia are cheap and subject to specials that reduce the rates even more, so it's worth shopping around – look in the *Yellow Pages* for a list of providers.

The **Country Direct service** (☎ 1800 801 800) connects callers in Australia with operators in nearly 60 countries to make reverse-charge (collect) or credit-card calls.

When calling overseas you will need to dial the international access code from Australia (☎ 0011 or ☎ 0018), the country code and then the area code (without the initial 0). So for a London telephone number you'll need to dial ☎ 0011-44-20, then the number. In addition, certain operators will have you dial a special code to access their service.

Some country codes:

Country	International Country Code
France	☎ 33
Germany	☎ 49
Ireland	☎ 353
Japan	☎ 81
Netherlands	☎ 31
New Zealand	☎ 64
UK	☎ 44
USA & Canada	☎ 1

If dialling Australia from overseas, the country code is ☎ 61 and you need to drop the 0 in state/territory area codes.

Local Calls

Calls from private phones cost 15c to 30c, while local calls from public phones cost 50c; both involve unlimited talk time. Calls to mobile phones attract higher rates and are timed.

Long-Distance Calls & Area Codes

For long-distance calls (more than 50km away), Australia uses four STD (Subscriber Trunk Dialling) area codes. These STD calls can be made from any public phone and are cheaper during off-peak hours – generally between 7pm and 7am and on weekends. Broadly, the main area codes are as follows.

State/Territory	Area code
ACT	☎ 02
NSW	☎ 02
NT	☎ 08
QLD	☎ 07
SA	☎ 08
TAS	☎ 03
VIC	☎ 03
WA	☎ 08

Area code boundaries don't necessarily coincide with state borders; some parts of NSW for example use each of the four neighbouring codes.

Mobile (Cell) Phones

Local numbers with the prefixes ☎ 04xx or ☎ 04xxxx belong to mobile phones. Australia's two mobile networks, digital GSM and digital CDMA, service more than 90% of the population but leave vast tracts of the country uncovered. The east coast, southeast and southwest get good reception, but elsewhere

(apart from major towns) it's haphazard or nonexistent.

Australia's digital network is compatible with GSM 900 and 1800 (used in Europe), but generally not with the systems used in the USA or Japan. It's easy and cheap enough to get connected short-term as the main service providers have prepaid mobile systems.

Phonocards

A variety of phonocards can be bought at newsagents, hostels and post offices for a fixed dollar value (usually \$10, \$20 etc) and can be used with any public or private phone by dialling a toll-free access number and then the PIN number on the card. Some public phones also accept credit cards.

TIME

Australia is divided into three time zones: the Western Standard Time zone (GMT/UTC plus eight hours) covers WA; Central Standard Time (plus 9½ hours) covers the NT and SA; and Eastern Standard Time (plus 10 hours) covers Tasmania, Victoria, NSW, the ACT and Queensland. There are minor exceptions – Broken Hill (NSW) for instance is on Central Standard Time. For international times, see www.timeanddate.com/worldclock.

'Daylight saving', for which clocks are put forward an hour, operates in most states during the warmer months (October to March). However, things can get pretty confusing, with WA, the NT and Queensland staying on standard time, while in Tasmania daylight saving starts a month earlier than in SA, Victoria, the ACT and NSW.

TOILETS

One of the pleasures of travelling in a 'first world' country is the abundance of hygienic and free public toilets. These can be found in shopping centres, parks and just about any other public space in the country.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Australia's highly self-conscious tourism infrastructure means that when you head out looking for information, you can easily end up being buried neck deep in brochures, booklets, maps and leaflets, or that you can get utterly swamped with detail during an online surf.

The **Australian Tourist Commission** (www.australia.com) is the national government tourist body, and has a good website for pre-trip research.

Local Tourist Offices

Within Australia, tourist information is disseminated by various regional and local offices. In this book, the main state and territory tourism authorities are listed in the introductory information section of each destination chapter. Almost every major town in Australia seems to maintain a tourist office of some type and in many cases they are very good, with friendly staff (often volunteers) providing local info not readily available from the state offices. If booking accommodation or tours from local offices, bear in mind that they often only promote businesses that are paying members of the local tourist association. Details of local tourism offices are given in the relevant city and town sections throughout this book.

Tourist Offices Abroad

The government body charged with improving foreign tourist relations is called **Tourism Australia** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 02-9360 1111; www.australia.com). A good place to start some pre-trip research is on its website, which has information in 10 languages (including French, German, Japanese and Spanish).

Some countries with Tourism Australia offices:

Germany (☎ 069-274 00622; Neue Mainzer Strasse 22, Frankfurt D 60311)

Japan (☎ 13-5214 0720; Australian Business Centre, New Otani Garden Court Bldg 28F, 4-1 Kioi-cho Chiyodaku, Tokyo 102-0094)

New Zealand (☎ 09-915 2826; Level 3, 125 The Strand, Parnell, Auckland)

Singapore (☎ 6255 4555; 101 Thomson Rd, United Sq 08-03, Singapore 307591)

Thailand (☎ 02 670 0640; 16th fl, Unit 1614, Empire Tower, 195 South Sathorn Rd, Yannawa, Sathorn, Bangkok 10120)

UK (☎ 020-7438 4601; 6th fl, Australia House, Melbourne Place/Strand, London WC2B 4LG)

USA (☎ 310-695 3200; Suite 1150, 6100 Center Dr, Los Angeles CA 90045)

VISAS

All visitors to Australia need a visa – only New Zealand nationals are exempt, and even they receive a 'special category' visa on arrival.

Application forms for the several types of visa are available from Australian diplomatic missions overseas (p1004), travel agents or the website of the **Department of Immigration & Citizenship** (☎ 13 18 81; www.immi.gov.au).

Electronic Travel Authority (ETA)

Many visitors can get an ETA through any International Air Transport Association (IATA)-registered travel agent or overseas airline. They make the application direct when you buy a ticket and issue the ETA, which replaces the usual visa stamped in your passport – it's common practice for travel agents to charge a fee, in the vicinity of US\$25, for issuing an ETA. This system is available to passport holders of 32 countries, including the UK, USA and Canada, most European and Scandinavian countries, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan and Korea.

You can also apply for the ETA online (www.eta.immi.gov.au), which attracts a non-refundable service charge of \$20.

Tourist Visas

Short-term tourist visas have largely been replaced by the ETA. However, if you are from a country not covered by the ETA, or you want to stay longer than three months, you'll need to apply for a visa. Standard Tourist Visas (which cost \$70) allow one (in some cases multiple) entry, for a stay of up to twelve months, and are valid for use within 12 months of issue.

Visa Extensions

A Further Stay visa can be applied for within Australia through the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. It's best to apply at least two or three weeks before your visa expires. The application fee is \$205 and is non-refundable, even if your application is rejected.

Working Holiday Maker (WHM) Visas

Young (aged 18 to 30) visitors from Belgium, Canada, China, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Taiwan and the UK are eligible for a WHM visa, which allows you to visit for up to one year and gain casual employment.

The emphasis of this visa is on casual and not full-time employment, so you're only sup-

posed to work for any one employer for a maximum of six months. This visa can only be applied for at Australian diplomatic missions abroad and you can't change from a tourist visa to a WHM visa once you're in Australia. You can also apply for this visa online at www.immi.gov.au/visitors/working-holiday.

You can apply for this visa up to a year in advance, which is worthwhile as there's a limit on the number issued each year. Conditions include having a return air ticket or sufficient funds for a return or onward fare, and an application fee of \$185 is charged. For details of what sort of employment is available and where, see p1016.

Visitors who have worked as a seasonal worker in regional Australia for a minimum of three months while on their first WHM are eligible to apply for a second WHM while still in Australia. 'Regional Australia' encompasses the vast majority of the country, excluding major cities; the definition of 'seasonal work' is a little more specific. The Department of Immigration has good information and straightforward facts that are easy to understand. Tourism Australia also has a dedicated website with helpful information – www.workaustralia.com.

See p1011 for information regarding income tax refunds, which holders of a WHM are eligible for.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Australia is generally a safe place for women travellers, although the usual sensible precautions apply. It's best to avoid walking alone late at night in any of the major cities and towns. And if you're out on the town, always keep enough money aside for a taxi back to your accommodation. The same applies to outback and rural towns where there are often a lot of unlit, semi-deserted streets between you and your temporary home. When the pubs and bars close and there are inebriated people roaming around, it's not a great time to be out and about. Lone women should also be wary of staying in basic pub accommodation unless it looks safe and well managed.

Sexual harassment is an ongoing problem, be it via an aggressive metropolitan male or a rural bloke living a less-than-enlightened pro forma bush existence. Stereotypically, the further you get from 'civilisation' (ie the big cities), the less enlightened your average Aussie male is probably going to be about women's issues. Having said that, many women

SEASONAL WORK

Seasonal fruit picking (harvesting) relies on casual labour and there is always something that needs to be picked, pruned or farmed somewhere in Australia all year round. It's definitely hard work that involves early-morning starts, and you're usually paid by how much you pick (per bin, bucket or whatever). Expect to earn about \$50 to \$60 a day to start with, more when you get quicker and better at it. Some work, such as pruning or sorting, is paid by the hour at around \$12 or \$13.

Throughout this book you'll find separate seasonal work information for towns where there is an abundance of this type of employment. Or, you can also call the **National Harvest Labour Information Service** (☎ 1800 062 332) for more information about when and where you're likely to pick up this sort of work.

The following table directs you to some of the more prominent areas and details general work seasons.

New South Wales

The NSW ski fields have seasonal work during the ski season, particularly around Thredbo (p242). There's also harvest work around Narrabri (p222) and Moree (p222), and grape picking in the Hunter Valley (p160). Fruit picking is all the go near Tenterfield (p214), Orange (p216) and Young (p218).

Industry	Time	Region(s)
tomatoes	Jan-Mar	Forbes
grapes	Feb-Mar	Griffith, Hunter Valley
apples	Feb-Apr	Orange, Batlow, Gundagai
asparagus	Oct-Dec	Jugiong (northeast of Gundagai)
cotton	Oct-Jan	Narrabri
bananas	Nov-Jan	North Coast
cherries	Nov-Jan	Orange, Batlow, Young
apples	Dec-Jan	Forbes
citrus	Dec-Mar	Griffith

Victoria

There's plenty of harvest work in Mildura (p555) and Shepparton (p592).

Industry	Time	Region(s)
tomatoes	Jan-Mar	Shepparton, Echuca
grapes/oranges	Jan-Mar	Mildura
peaches/pears	Feb-Apr	Shepparton
apples	Mar-May	Bendigo
ski fields	Jun-Oct	Wangaratta/Alps
strawberries	Oct-Dec	Echuca, Dandenongs
cherries	Nov-Dec	Dandenongs

Tasmania

The apple orchards around the Huon Valley, especially Cygnet (p644), are your best bet for work in Tassie.

Industry	Time	Region(s)
strawberries/raspberries	Jan-Apr	Huonville
apples/pears	Mar-Apr	Huon/Tamar Valleys
grapes	Mar-Apr	Tamar Valley
cherries	Dec-Jan	Huonville

Queensland

Farm work and fruit picking is available in north Queensland around Cardwell (p411), Tully (p412), and Mareeba (p440). Further south there's loads of seasonal work on the Fraser Coast and within the Darling Downs; see the box text, p353.

Industry	Time	Region(s)
grapes	Jan-Apr	Stanthorpe
apples	Feb-Mar	Warwick
tourism	Apr-Oct	Cairns
fishing trawlers	May-Aug	Cairns
vegies	May-Nov	Bowen
asparagus	Aug-Dec	Warwick
tomatoes	Oct-Dec	Bundaberg
mangoes	Dec-Jan	Atherton, Mareeba
bananas	year-round	Tully, Innisfail

South Australia

Good seasonal work opportunities can be found in the Fleurieu Peninsula (p733), Limestone Coast (p754) and along the Murray River (p760).

Industry	Time	Region(s)
tomatoes	Jan-Feb	Riverland
grapes	Feb-Apr	Riverland, Barossa, Clare
peaches	Feb-Jun	Riverland
apples/pears	Feb-Jul	Adelaide Hills
citrus	May-Dec	Berri, Riverland
pruning	Aug-Dec	Adelaide Hills
apricots	Dec	Riverland

Northern Territory

For information on seasonal work in the Northern Territory, see p792.

Industry	Time	Region(s)
tourism	May-Sep	Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine
mangoes	Oct-Nov	Darwin, Katherine

Western Australia

WA is in a labour shortage and a wealth of opportunities exist for travellers (both Australian and foreign) for paid work year-round.

In Perth, plenty of temporary work is available in tourism and hospitality, administration, IT, nursing, childcare, factories, and labouring. Outside of Perth, travellers can easily get jobs in tourism and hospitality, plus a variety of seasonal work. For grape-picking work in Margaret River, see p914.

Industry	Time	Region(s)
grapes	Feb-Mar	Albany, Margaret River, Mt Barker, Manjimup
apples/pears	Feb-Apr	Donnybrook, Manjimup
prawn trawlers	Mar-June	Carnarvon
bananas	Apr-Dec	Kununurra
bananas	year-round	Carnarvon
vegies	May-Nov	Kununurra, Carnarvon
tourism	May-Dec	Kununurra
flowers	Sep-Nov	Midlands
lobsters	Nov-May	Esperance

travellers say that they have met the friendliest, most down-to-earth blokes in outback pubs and remote roadhouse stops. And cities still have to put up with their unfortunate share of 'ocker' males who regard a bit of sexual harassment as a right, and chauvinism as a desirable trait.

Lone female hitchers are tempting fate – hitching with a male companion is safer. See Crime (p1003) for a warning on drugged drinks, and the boxed text, p394, for some cautionary words on crewing private boats.

WORK

If you come to Australia on a tourist visa then you're not allowed to work for pay – working for approved volunteer organisations (for details see opposite) in exchange for board is OK. If you're caught breaching your visa conditions, you can be expelled from the country and placed on a banned list for up to three years.

Equipped with a WHM visa (see p1015), you can begin to sniff out the possibilities for temporary employment. Casual work can often be found during peak season at the major tourist centres. Places like Alice Springs, Cairns and various resort towns along the Queensland coast, and the ski fields of Victoria and NSW are all good prospects when the country is in holiday mode.

Many travellers have found work cleaning or attending the reception desk at backpacker hostels, which usually means free accommodation. Most hostels, however, are now employing their own locally based staff.

Other prospects for casual employment include factory work, labouring, bar work, waiting tables, domestic chores at outback roadhouses, nanny work, working as a station hand (jackaroo/jillaroo) and collecting for charities. People with computer, secretarial, nursing and teaching skills can find work temping in the major cities by registering with a relevant agency.

Information

Backpacker accommodation, magazines and newspapers are good resources for local work opportunities.

Useful websites:

Career One (www.careerone.com) General employment site, good for metropolitan areas.

Face2Face Fundraising (www.face2facefundraising.com.au) Fundraising jobs for charities and not-for-profits.

Good Cause (www.goodcause.com.au) Fundraising jobs for charities and not-for-profits.

Grunt Labour (www.gruntlabour.com) Specialises in labour, manufacturing and agricultural-based recruitment.

Harvest Trail (www.jobsearch.gov.au/harvesttrail) Harvest jobs around Australia.

isearch Australia (www.isearchaustralia.com.au) Information working on cattle farms.

Seek (www.seek.com) General employment site, good for metropolitan areas.

Workabout Australia (www.workaboutaustralia.com.au) By Barry Brebner, it gives a state-by-state breakdown of seasonal work opportunities.

Work Oz (www.workoz.com) Visa, travel, bank account and other practical information regarding working in Australia.

Tax

PAYING TAX & TAX REFUNDS

Even with a tax file number (TFN), non-residents (including WHM visa holders) pay a considerably higher rate of tax than Australian residents, especially those on a low income. For a start, there's no tax-free threshold – you pay tax on every dollar you earn.

Because you have been paid wages in Australia, you must lodge a tax return with the **Australian Taxation Office** (ATO; ☎ 13 28 61; www.ato.gov.au). To lodge a tax return, you will need your TFN and also a Group Certificate (an official summary of your earnings and tax payments) provided by your employer – give them written advice at least 14 days in advance that you want the certificate on your last day at work, otherwise you may have to wait until the end of the financial year.

You should lodge your tax return by 31 October, unless you have been granted an extension to lodge at a later date. If you leave Australia permanently before the end of the tax year the Australian Tax Office may accept an early lodgement (ie before June 30). It can take up to six weeks to process your tax return, so make sure you write an address on your tax return where it can send your notice of assessment.

It's important to bear in mind that you are not entitled to a refund for the tax you paid – you will only receive a refund if too much tax was withheld from your pay. If you didn't pay enough while you were working then you will have to pay more. You are, however, entitled to any superannuation that has been deducted from your pay. You may hear

rumours of a 'harvest tax' – ignore them – this doesn't exist and you aren't eligible for a great refund by doing harvest work.

For more information contact the ATO, which can provide advice over the phone and has an informative website. Another good website is www.taxsites.com/international/australia.html.

TAX FILE NUMBER

If you have a WHM visa, you should apply for a TFN. Without it, tax will be deducted from any wages you receive at the maximum rate (around 47%). Apply for a TFN online via the ATO (www.ato.gov.au); it takes about four weeks to be issued.

Volunteering

Mainly involved in recruiting Australians to work overseas, **Australian Volunteers International** (AVI; ☎ 1800 331 282, 03-9279 1788; www.australianvolunteers.com) does also place skilled volunteers into Aboriginal communities in northern and central Australia. Most of the placements are paid contracts for a minimum of a year and you will need a work visa. There are, however, occasional short-term placements, especially in the medical or accounting fields, and short-term unskilled jobs, usually helping out at community-run roadhouses.

The nonprofit **Conservation Volunteers Australia** (CVA; ☎ 1800 032 501, 03-5330 2600; www.conservationvolunteers.com.au) organises practical conservation projects such as tree planting, walking-track construction, and flora and fauna surveys. It's an excellent way to get involved with conservation-minded people and visit some interesting areas of the country. Most projects are either for a weekend or a week and all food, transport and accommodation is supplied in return for a small contribution to help cover costs (\$30 per day). Many travellers join a Conservation Experience package of either four or six weeks (\$945 and \$1410), both of which comprise several different projects; additional weeks can be added for \$210 per seven-day block.

Willing Workers on Organic Farms (WWOOF; ☎ 03-5155 0218; www.wwoof.com.au) is well established in

Australia. The idea is that you do a few hours work each day on a farm in return for bed and board, often in a family home. Almost all places have a minimum stay of two nights. As the name states, the farms are supposed to be organic (including permaculture and biodynamic growing), but that isn't always so. Some places aren't even farms – you might help out at a pottery or do the books at a seed wholesaler. Whether participants in the scheme have a farm or just a veggie patch, most are concerned to some extent with alternative lifestyles. You can join online or through various WWOOF agents (see the website for details) for a fee of \$55/65 per single/couple. You'll get a membership number and a booklet that lists participating enterprises. If you need these posted overseas, add another \$5.

The **Earthwatch Institute** (www.earthwatch.org) offers volunteer 'expeditions' that focus on conservation and wildlife. At the time of writing it had a good project in Coorong on Kangaroo Island (p737) in South Australia.

STA (www.statravel.co.uk) is another great resource for international travellers seeking volunteer holiday opportunities in Australia. Lonely Planet's *International Volunteering Handbook* also provides useful information about volunteering throughout the world.

More useful organisations:

Go Volunteer (www.govolunteer.com.au) National website listing volunteer opportunities.

i-to-i (www.i-to-i.com) Conservation-based volunteer holidays in Australia.

Nature Conservation Society (www.ncssa.asn.au) Survey fieldwork volunteer opportunities in SA.

Reef Watch (www.reefwatch.asn.au) Surveys sightings of introduced marine pests and endangered native species.

Responsible Travel (www.responsibletravel.com) Volunteer travel opportunities.

Scientific Expedition Group (www.communitywebs.org/scientificexpeditiongroup) Loads of different scientific and cultural data collection volunteer opportunities in South Australia.

Threatened Species Network SA (www.wwf.org.au/tsn) South Australian volunteer opportunities focusing on the monitoring and conservation of threatened species.

Volunteering Australia (www.volunteeringaustralia.org) Support, advice and volunteer training.

Transport

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GETTING THERE & AWAY

They don't call Australia the land 'down under' for nothing. It's a long way from just about everywhere, and getting here is usually going to mean a long-haul flight. That 'over the horizon' feeling doesn't stop once you're here, either – the distances between key cities (much less opposing coastlines) can be vast, requiring a minimum of an hour or two of air time but up to several days of highway cruising or dirt-road jostling to traverse.

ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Disembarkation in Australia is a straightforward affair, with only the usual customs declarations (p999) and the fight to be first to the luggage carousel to endure. However, global instability in the last few years has resulted in conspicuously increased security in Australian airports, and you may find that customs procedures are now more time-consuming.

Passport

There are no restrictions when it comes to citizens of foreign countries entering Australia. If you have a visa (p1014), you should be fine.

AIR

There are lots of competing airlines and a wide variety of air fares to choose from if you're

flying in from Asia, Europe or North America, but you'll still pay a lot for a flight. Because of Australia's size and diverse climate, any time of year can prove busy for inbound tourists – if you plan to fly at a particularly popular time of year (Christmas is notoriously difficult for Sydney and Melbourne) or on a particularly popular route (such as Hong Kong, Bangkok or Singapore to Sydney or Melbourne), make your arrangements well in advance of your trip.

The high season for flights into Australia is roughly over the country's summer (December to February), with slightly less of a premium on fares over the shoulder months (October/November and March/April). The low season generally tallies with the winter months (June to August), though this is actually the peak tourist season in central Australia and the Top End.

Airports & Airlines

Australia has several international gateways, with Sydney and Melbourne being the busiest. The full list of international airports follows.

- Adelaide** (code ADL; ☎ 08-8308 9211; www.aal.com.au)
Brisbane (code BNE; ☎ 07-3406 3190; www.brisbaneairport.com.au)
Cairns (code CNS; ☎ 07-4052 9703; www.cairnsport.com.au/airport)
Darwin (code DRW; ☎ 08-8920 1811; www.ntapl.com.au)
Melbourne (Tullamarine; code MEL; ☎ 03-9297 1600; www.melbourne-airport.com.au)
Perth (code PER; ☎ 08-9478 8888; www.perthairport.net.au)
Sydney (Kingsford Smith; code SYD; ☎ 02-9667 9111; www.sydneyairport.com.au)

THINGS CHANGE ...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and to be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

Australia's overseas carrier is Qantas, which is regarded as one of the world's safest airlines and flies chiefly to runways across Europe, North America, Asia and the Pacific. It's one of a dozen international airlines that have already placed orders for the new double-decker Airbus A380, the biggest aircraft ever built and which is set to lumber into the skies sometime in late 2007.

Airlines that visit Australia include the following (all phone numbers listed here are for dialling from within Australia).

- Air Canada** (airline code AC; ☎ 1300 655 767; www.aircanada.ca; hub Pearson International Airport, Toronto)
Air New Zealand (airline code NZ; ☎ 13 24 76; www.airnz.com.au; hub Auckland International Airport)
British Airways (airline code BA; ☎ 1300 767 177; www.britishairways.com; hub Heathrow Airport, London)
Cathay Pacific (airline code CX; ☎ 13 17 47; www.cathaypacific.com; hub Hong Kong International Airport)
Emirates (airline code EK; ☎ 1300 303 777; www.emirates.com; hub Dubai International Airport)
Freedom Air (airline code SJ; ☎ 1800 122 000; www.freedomair.com; hub Auckland International Airport)
Garuda Indonesia (airline code GA; ☎ 1300 365 330; www.garuda-indonesia.com; hub Soekarno-Hatta International Airport, Jakarta)
Gulf Air (airline code GF; ☎ 1300 366 337; www.gulfairco.com; hub Abu Dhabi International Airport)
Hawaiian Airlines (airline code HA; ☎ 1300 669 106; www.hawaiianairlines.com.au; hub Honolulu International Airport, Hawaii)
Japan Airlines (airline code JL; ☎ 02-9272 1111; www.jal.com; hub Narita Airport, Tokyo)
KLM (airline code KL; ☎ 1300 392 192; www.klm.com; hub Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam)
Lufthansa (airline code LH; ☎ 1300 655 727; www.lufthansa.com; hub Frankfurt Airport)
Malaysia Airlines (airline code MH; ☎ 13 26 27; www.malaysiaairlines.com; hub Kuala Lumpur International Airport)
Pacific Blue (airline code DJ; ☎ 13 16 45; www.flypacificblue.com; hub Brisbane Airport)
Qantas (airline code QF; ☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au; hub Kingsford Smith Airport, Sydney)
Royal Brunei Airlines (airline code BI; ☎ 1300 721 271; www.bruneiair.com; hub Bandar Seri Begawan Airport, Brunei)
Singapore Airlines (airline code SQ; ☎ 13 10 11; www.singaporeair.com.au; hub Changi International Airport, Singapore)
South African Airways (airline code SA; ☎ 1800 221 699; www.flysaa.com; hub Johannesburg International Airport)

Thai Airways International (airline code TG; ☎ 1300 651 960; www.thaiairways.com.au; hub Bangkok International Airport)

Tiger Airways (airline code TR; www.tigerairways.com; hub Changi International Airport, Singapore)

United Airlines (airline code UA; ☎ 13 17 77; www.unitedairlines.com.au; hub Los Angeles International Airport)

Tickets

Automated online ticket sales work well if you're doing a simple one-way or return trip on specified dates, but are no substitute for a travel agent with the low-down on special deals, strategies for avoiding stopovers and other useful advice.

Paying by credit card offers some protection if you unwittingly end up dealing with a rogue fly-by-night agency, as most card issuers provide refunds if you can prove you didn't get what you paid for. Alternatively, buy a ticket from a bonded agent, such as one covered by the **Air Travel Organiser's Licence** (ATOL; www.atol.org.uk) scheme in the UK. If you have doubts about the service provider, at the very least call the airline and confirm that your booking has been made.

CIRCLE PACIFIC TICKETS

A Circle Pacific ticket is similar to a round-the-world (RTW) ticket but covers a more limited region, using a combination of airlines to connect Australia, New Zealand, North America and Asia, with stopover options in the Pacific islands. As with RTW tickets, there are restrictions on how many stopovers you can take.

INTERCONTINENTAL (RTW) TICKETS

If you are flying to Australia from the other side of the world, RTW tickets can be real bargains. They're generally put together by the three biggest airline alliances – **Star Alliance** (www.staralliance.com), **Oneworld** (www.oneworldalliance.com) and **Skyteam** (www.skyteam.com) – and give you a limited period (usually a year) in which to circumnavigate the globe. You can go anywhere the participating airlines go, as long as you stay within the prescribed kilometre extents or number of stops and don't backtrack when flying between continents. Backtracking is generally permitted within a single continent, though with certain restrictions; see the relevant websites for details.

An alternative type of RTW ticket is one put together by a travel agent. These are usually

more expensive than airline RTW fares but allow you to devise your own itinerary.

ONLINE TICKET SITES

For online ticket bookings, including RTW fares, start with the following websites:

Air Brokers (www.airbrokers.com) This US company specialises in cheap tickets. Fly Los Angeles or San Francisco–Hong Kong–Bangkok–Singapore–Bali–Perth or Darwin; or Auckland–Fiji–Hawaii–Los Angeles or San Francisco.

Cheap Flights (www.cheapflights.com) Informative site with specials, airline information and flight searches from the USA and other regions.

Cheapest Flights (www.cheapestflights.co.uk) Cheap worldwide flights from the UK; get in early for the bargains.

Expedia (www.expedia.msn.com) Microsoft's travel site; mainly USA-related.

Flight Centre International (www.flightcentre.com) Respected operator handling direct flights, with sites for Australia, New Zealand, the UK, the USA, Canada and South Africa.

Flights.com (www.flights.com) International site for flights; offers cheap fares and an easy-to-search database.

Roundtheworldflights.com (www.roundtheworldflights.com) This excellent site allows you to build your own trips from the UK with up to six stops.

STA Travel (www.statravel.com) Prominent in international student travel but you don't have to be a student; site linked to worldwide STA sites.

Travel Online (www.travelonline.co.nz) Good place to check worldwide flights from New Zealand.

Travel.com.au (www.travel.com.au) Good Australian site; look up fares and flights to/from the country.

Travelocity (www.travelocity.com) US site that allows you to search fares (in US dollars) to/from practically anywhere.

Asia

Most Asian countries offer competitive airfare deals, but Bangkok, Singapore and Hong Kong are the best places to shop around for discount tickets.

Flights between Hong Kong and Australia are notoriously heavily booked. Flights to/from Bangkok and Singapore are often part of the longer Europe-to-Australia route so they are also in demand. Plan your preferred itinerary well in advance.

You can get cheap short-hop flights between Darwin and Indonesia, a route serviced by Garuda Indonesia and Qantas. Airnorth runs flights between Darwin and Dili, East Timor (see opposite).

Royal Brunei Airlines flies between Darwin and Bandar Seri Begawan Airport, while Malaysia Airlines flies from Kuala Lumpur.

Tiger Airways, a budget carrier, recently started services from Singapore to Darwin and Perth; after domestic services commence in late 2007, look out for an expansion of flights from Asian destinations into Australia.

Excellent bargains are sometimes available in Hong Kong. Some Asian agents:

No 1 Travel (☎ 03-3205 6073; www.no1-travel.com) In Japan.

STA Travel Bangkok (☎ 02-236 0262; www.statravel.com.th); Singapore (☎ 6737 7188; www.statravel.com.sg); Tokyo (☎ 03-5391-2922; www.statravel.co.jp)

Canada

The air routes from Canada are similar to those from mainland USA, with most Toronto and Vancouver flights stopping in one US city such as Los Angeles or Honolulu before heading on to Australia.

The air fares sold by Canadian discount air-ticket sellers (consolidators) tend to be about 10% higher than those sold in the USA. **Travel Cuts** (☎ 866-246-9762; www.travelcuts.com) is Canada's national student travel agency and has offices in all major cities.

Continental Europe

From major European destinations, most flights travel to Australia via one of the Asian capitals. Some flights are also routed through London before arriving in Australia via Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong or Kuala Lumpur.

In Germany, good travel agencies include **Adventure Travel** (www.adventure-holidays.com), which specialises in Australian travel, and the Berlin branch of **STA Travel** (☎ 069 743 032 92; www.statravel.de). In France try **Usit Connect Voyages** (☎ 0825 082 525; www.usitconnections.fr) or **OTU Voyages** (☎ 01 55 82 32 32; www.otu.fr) – both of these companies are student/youth specialists and have offices in many French cities. Other recommendations include **Voyageurs du Monde** (☎ 08 92 23 56 56; www.vdm.com/vdm) and **Nouvelles Frontières** (☎ 08 25 00 07 47; www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr); the details given are for offices in Paris, but again both companies have branches elsewhere.

More travel agencies:

BarronTravel (☎ 020-625 8600; www.barron.nl) Dutch agency specialising in Australian travel.

Holland International (☎ 0900-8858; www.hollandinternational.nl) Good Dutch agency.

Wereldcontact (☎ 0343 530 530; www.wereldcontact.nl) Dutch agency.

New Zealand

Air New Zealand and Qantas operate a network of flights linking key New Zealand cities with most major Australian gateway cities, while quite a few other international airlines include New Zealand and Australia on their Asia-Pacific routes.

Another trans-Tasman option is the no-frills budget airline Freedom Air, an Air New Zealand subsidiary that offers direct flights between destinations on Australia's east coast and main New Zealand cities.

Pacific Blue, a subsidiary of budget airline Virgin Blue, flies between both Christchurch and Wellington and several Australian cities, including Perth, Hobart and Adelaide.

There's usually not a significant difference in price between seasons, as this is a popular route year-round.

For reasonably priced fares, try one of the numerous branches of **STA Travel** (☎ 0800 474 400; www.statravel.co.nz). Another good option is **House of Travel** (☎ 0800 367 468; www.houseoftravel.co.nz).

UK & Ireland

There are two routes from the UK: the western route via the USA and the Pacific; and the eastern route via the Middle East and Asia. Flights are usually cheaper and more frequent on the latter. Some of the best deals around are with Emirates, Gulf Air, Malaysia Airlines, Japan Airlines and Thai Airways International. British Airways, Singapore Airlines and Qantas generally have higher fares but may offer a more direct route.

Discount air travel is big business in London. Advertisements for travel agencies appear in the travel pages of the weekend broadsheet newspapers, in *Time Out*, in the *Evening Standard* and in the free magazine *TNT*.

Popular agencies in the UK include the ubiquitous **STA Travel** (☎ 0871 230 0040; www.statravel.co.uk), **Traifinders** (☎ 020-7938 3939; www.traifinders.co.uk) and **Flight Centre** (☎ 0870 499 0040; www.flightcentre.co.uk).

At peak times such as mid-December, fares go up by as much as 30%.

USA

Most of the flights between the North American mainland and Australia travel to/from the USA's west coast, with the bulk routed through Los Angeles but some coming through San Francisco. Numerous airlines offer flights via Asia or various Pacific islands.

San Francisco is the ticket consolidator capital of America, although good deals can be found in Los Angeles, New York and other big cities.

STA Travel (☎ 800-781 4040; www.statravel.com) has offices all over the USA.

SEA

It's possible (though by no means easy or safe) to make your way between Australia and countries such as Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, and between New Zealand and Australia and some smaller Pacific islands, by hitching rides or crewing on yachts – usually you have to at least contribute towards food. Ask around at harbours, marinas and sailing clubs.

Good places on the Australian east coast include Coff's Harbour, Great Keppel Island, Airlie Beach and the Whitsundays, and Cairns – basically anywhere boats call. Darwin could yield Indonesia-bound possibilities. A lot of boats move north to escape the winter, so April is a good time to look for a berth in the Sydney area.

There are no passenger liners operating to/from Australia and finding a berth on a cargo ship is difficult – that's if you actually wanted to spend months at sea aboard an enormous metal can.

GETTING AROUND

AIR

Time pressures combined with the vastness of the Australian continent may lead you to consider taking to the skies at some point in your trip. Nicotine fiends should note that all domestic flights are nonsmoking.

Airlines in Australia

Qantas is the country's chief domestic airline, represented at the so-called 'budget' end of the national air-travel market by its subsidiary Jetstar. Another highly competitive carrier that flies all over Australia is Virgin Blue. Keep in mind if flying with Jetstar or Virgin Blue that these no-frills airlines close check-in 30 minutes prior to a flight.

Australia also has many smaller operators flying regional routes. In many places, such as remote outback destinations or islands, these are the only viable transport option. Many of these airlines operate as subsidiaries or commercial partners of Qantas.

Some regional airlines:

Aero Tropics (☎ 1300 656 110, 07-4040 1222; www.aero-tropics.com.au) Flies to Cape York and Torres Strait.

Aeropelican (☎ 13 13 13; www.aeropelican.com.au) Flies between Newcastle (Williamstown Airport), Inverell and Sydney, with plans to fly to/from Cooma in 2007.

Air Link (☎ 13 17 13; www.airlinkairlines.com.au) Flies to Dubbo, Bourke, Sydney, Bathurst and Mudgee.

Airnorth (☎ 1800 627 464; www.airnorth.com.au) Flies across northern Australia between Darwin, Kununurra, Broome and Gove; also flies across the Timor Sea to Dili (East Timor) and to Kupang (Indonesia). A member of the RegionalLink consortium.

Alliance Airlines (☎ 07-3212 1212; www.allianceairlines.com.au) Charter flights between Brisbane, Mt Isa, Townsville and Cairns.

Brindabella Airlines (☎ 1300 668 824; www.brindabellaairlines.com.au) Flies to Canberra, Albury, Newcastle, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Brisbane.

Golden Eagle Airlines (☎ 08-9172 1777; www.goldeneagleairlines.com) Offers services in the northwest of WA. Flies from Broome to Derby, Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek.

Jetstar (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com.au) Budget-oriented Qantas subsidiary flying to all the capital cities and around 15 east-coast destinations from Cairns to Hobart.

Macair (☎ 13 13 13; www.macair.com.au) Commercially partnered with Qantas, this Townsville-based airline flies throughout western and northern Queensland.

Norfolk Air (☎ 1300 663 913; www.norfolkair.com) Flies between Brisbane and Sydney.

O'Connor (☎ 08-8723 0666; www.oconnor-airlines.com.au) Another Qantas partner, flying between Melbourne, Adelaide, Mildura, Mount Gambier, Port Augusta and Whyalla.

OzJet (☎ 1300 737 000; www.ozjet.com.au) This carrier has recently started services between Perth and Derby; it also code-shares flights from Sydney and Brisbane to Norfolk Island.

Qantas (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) Australia's chief domestic airline.

QantasLink (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) Flying across Australia under this Qantas subsidiary brand is a collective of regional airlines that includes Eastern Australia Airlines, Airlink and Sunstate Airlines.

Regional Express (Rex; ☎ 13 17 13; www.regional-express.com.au) Flies to Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Burnie and around 25 other destinations in New South Wales (NSW), Victoria, South Australia (SA) and Tasmania.

Regional Pacific Airlines (☎ 1300 797 667, 07-4040 1400; www.regionalpacific.com.au) Flies between Cairns and Bamaga and throughout Torres Strait.

Skippers (☎ 1300 729 924; www.skippers.com.au) Flies between a half-dozen Western Australia (WA) destinations, including Perth, Laverton, Meekatharra and Wiluna.

Skytrans (☎ 1800 818 405; www.skytrans.com.au) Flies to Cairns, Coen, Aurukun, Cooktown and Yorke Island.

Skywest (☎ 1300 660 088; www.skywest.com.au) Flies from Perth to many western towns, including Albany, Esperance, Exmouth, Carnarvon, Kalgoorlie and Broome, plus Darwin up north.

Sunshine Express (☎ 13 13 13; www.sunshineexpress.com.au) Charter flights from Brisbane to the Sunshine Coast, Maryborough and Hervey Bay.

Tasair (☎ 02-6248 5088; www.tasair.com.au) Flies between Devonport and King Island.

Tiger Airways (www.tigerairways.com) A subsidiary of Singapore Airlines, this budget carrier has recently got the go-ahead to begin domestic air services within Australia, probably in late 2007. It has a reputation for genuinely *cheap* fares (similar to the European budget carriers).

Virgin Blue (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au) Highly competitive, Virgin Blue flies all over Australia – Virgin fares are cheaper if booked online (discount per ticket \$10).

Air Passes

With discounting being the norm these days, air passes are not great value. Qantas' **Boomerang Pass** (☎ 13 13 13) can only be purchased overseas and involves buying coupons for either short-haul flights (up to 1200km, eg Hobart to Melbourne) or multizone sectors (including New Zealand and the Pacific). You must purchase a minimum of two coupons before you arrive in Australia, and once here you can buy more.

Regional Express has the **Rex Backpacker** (☎ 13 17 13) scheme, where international travellers clutching a VIP, YHA, ISIC or IYTC card (Australian residents are not eligible) buy one or two months' worth of unlimited travel on the airline; it applies to standby fares only.

BICYCLE

Australia has much to offer cyclists, from leisurely bike paths winding through most major cities to thousands of kilometres of good country roads where you can wear out your chain wheels. 'Mountainous' is not an adjective that applies to this country. Instead, there's lots of flat countryside and gently rolling hills – that said, mountain bikers can find plenty of forestry trails and high country.

Bike helmets are compulsory in all states and territories, as are white front lights and red rear lights for riding at night.

If you are bringing in your own bike, check with your airline for costs and the degree of

dismantling and packing required. Within Australia, bus companies require you to dismantle your bike and some don't guarantee that it will travel on the same bus as you. On trains supervise the loading (if possible tie your bike upright) and check for possible restrictions: most intercity trains carry only two to three boxed bikes per service.

Eastern Australia was settled on the principle of not having more than a day's horse ride between pubs, so it's possible to plan even ultralong routes and still get a shower at the end of each day. Most riders carry camping equipment but, on the east coast at least, it's feasible to travel from town to town staying in hostels, hotels or caravan parks.

You can get by with standard road maps but, as you'll probably want to avoid both highways and low-grade unsealed roads, the government series is best. The 1:250,000 scale is the most suitable, though you'll need a lot of maps if you're going far. The next scale up, 1:1,000,000, is adequate and is widely available in speciality map shops.

Carry plenty of water to avoid dehydration. Cycling in the summer heat can be made more endurable by wearing a helmet with a peak (or a cap under your helmet), using plenty of sunscreen, not cycling in the middle of the day, and drinking lots of water (not soft drinks). It can get very cold in the mountains, so pack appropriate clothing. In the south, beware the blistering hot northerlies that can make a north-bound cyclist's life hell in summer. The southeast trade winds begin to blow in April, when you can have (theoretically at least) tailwinds all the way to Darwin.

Outback travel needs to be properly planned, with the availability of drinking water the main concern (remember that most of the country is in a drought) – those isolated water sources (bores, tanks, creeks and the like) shown on your map may be dry or undrinkable, so you can't depend entirely on them. Also make sure you've got the necessary spare parts and bike-repair knowledge. Check with locals if you're heading into remote areas, and let someone know where you're headed before setting off.

Information

The national cycling body is the **Bicycle Federation of Australia** (☎ 02-6249 6761; www.bfa.asn.au). Each state and territory has a touring

organisation that can also help with cycling information and put you in touch with touring clubs.

Bicycle New South Wales (☎ 02-9218 5400; www.bicyclensw.org.au)

Bicycle Queensland (☎ 07-3844 1144; www.bq.org.au)

Bicycle SA (☎ 08-8232 2644; www.bikesa.asn.au)

Bicycle Tasmania (www.biketass.org.au)

Bicycle Transportation Alliance (☎ 08-9420 7210; www.multiline.com.au/~bta) In WA.

Bicycle Victoria (☎ 03-8636 8888; www.bv.com.au)

Northern Territory Cycling Association (☎ 08-8945 6012; www.nt.cycling.org.au)

Pedal Power ACT (☎ 02-6248 7995; www.pedalpower.org.au)

For more information, see Lonely Planet's *Cycling Australia*.

Purchase

If you arrive in the country without a set of wheels and want to buy a reliable new road cycle or mountain bike, your absolute bottom-level starting point is \$400 to \$550. To set yourself up with a new bike, plus all the requisite on-the-road equipment such as panniers, helmet etc, your starting point becomes \$1500 to \$2000. Secondhand bikes are worth checking out in the cities, as are the post-Christmas sales and midyear stocktakes, when newish cycles can be heavily discounted.

Your best bet for reselling your bike is via the **Trading Post** (www.tradingpost.com.au), which is distributed in newspaper form in many urban centres and also has a busy online trading site.

BOAT

There's a hell of a lot of water around Australia but unless you're fortunate enough to hook up with a yacht, it's not a feasible way of getting around. The only regular passenger services of note are run by **TT-Line** (☎ 1800 634 906; www.spiritoftasmania.com.au), which dispatches two high-speed, vehicle-carrying ferries – *Spirit of Tasmania I & II* – between Devonport and Melbourne. See p611 for more details.

BUS

Australia's extensive bus network is a relatively cheap and reliable way to get around, though it can be a tedious means of travel and requires planning if you intend to do more than straightforward city-to-city trips. Most buses are equipped with air-con, toilets and videos, and all are smoke-free zones. The

smallest towns eschew formal bus terminals for a single drop-off/pick-up point, usually outside a post office, newsagent or shop.

A national bus network is provided by **Greyhound Australia** (☎ 13 14 99; www.greyhound.com.au). Fares purchased online are roughly 5% cheaper than over-the-counter tickets; fares purchased by phone incur a \$4 booking fee.

Due to convoluted licensing arrangements involving some regional bus operators, there are some states and smaller areas in Australia – namely SA, Victoria and parts of NSW and northern Queensland – where you cannot buy a Greyhound ticket to travel between two destinations within that state/area. Rather, your ticket needs to take you out of the region or across a state/territory border. For example, you

cannot get on a Greyhound bus in Melbourne (Victoria) and get off in Ballarat (Victoria), but you can travel from Melbourne to Bordertown (SA). This situation does not apply to bus passes (opposite), which can be used freely.

Small regional operators running key routes or covering a lot of ground include the following:

Crisps' Coaches (☎ 07-4661 8333; www.crisps.com.au) Throughout Queensland.

Emerald Coaches (☎ 1800 28737, 4982 4444; www.emeraldcoaches.com.au) Queensland.

Firefly Express (☎ 1300 730 740; www.fireflyexpress.com.au) Runs between Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.

Integrity Coach Lines (☎ 1800 226 339; www.integritycoachlines.com.au) Heads north from Perth up to Port Hedland.

PRINCIPAL BUS ROUTES & RAILWAYS



Kirklands (☎ 1300 367 077; www.kirklands.com.au)
Premier Motor Service (☎ 13 34 10; www.premiers.com.au) Runs along the east coast between Cairns and Melbourne.

Premier Stataliner (☎ 08-8415 5555; www.premierstataliner.com.au) Services towns around SA.

Redline Coaches (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) Services Hobart and Tasmania's northern and eastern coasts.

Suncoast Pacific (www.suncoastpacific.com.au) Queensland.

TassieLink (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) Crisscrosses Tasmania, with extra summer links to bushwalking locales.

Transnorth (☎ 07-4036 9250, www.transnorthbus.com.au)

Transwa (☎ 1300 662 205; www.transwa.wa.gov.au) Hauls itself around the southern half of WA.

VLine (☎ 13 61 96; www.vline.com.au) Runs to most major towns and cities in Victoria.

Backpacker Buses

While the companies offering transport options for budget travellers in various parts of Australia are pretty much organised-tour operators, they do also get you from A to B (sometimes with hop-on, hop-off services) and so can be a cost-effective alternative to the big bus companies. The buses are usually smaller, you'll meet lots of other travellers, and the drivers sometimes double as tour guides; conversely, some travellers find the tour-group mentality and inherent limitations don't suit them. Discounts for card-carrying students and members of hostel organisations are usually available.

Adventure Tours Australia (☎ 1300 654 604; www.adventuretours.com.au) This company does budget tours in all states except NSW. A two-day Red Centre tour starting/finishing in Alice Springs and taking in Uluru, Kata Tjuta and Kings Canyon costs \$350 (plus national park entry fees), while a 10-day trip from Perth to Broome costs \$1250.

Autopia Tours (☎ 1800 000 507; www.autopiatours.com.au) Autopia runs three-day trips along the Great Ocean Rd from Melbourne to Adelaide via the Grampians for \$345. The four-day Melbourne–Sydney tour goes via Wilsons Prom, the Snowy Mountains and Canberra (\$400).

Easyrider Backpacker Tours (☎ 1300 308 477; www.easyridertours.com.au) A true hop-on, hop-off bus, but you can also do trips as tours. It covers the west coast from Esperance to Broome, with trips out of Perth. The Southern Curl goes Perth–Margaret River–Albany–Perth (\$250) in three days. A trip from Perth to Exmouth costs \$360 and Exmouth to Broome costs \$350.

Groovy Grape Getaways Australia (☎ 1800 661 177, 08-8371 4000; www.groovygrape.com.au) This SA-based operator offers three-day Melbourne–Adelaide tours (\$325) along the Great Ocean Rd and seven-day Adelaide–Alice Springs tours (\$825), stopping in the Flinders Ranges, Coober Pedy and Uluru. Small groups.

Nullarbor Traveller (☎ 08-8390 3297; www.the-traveller.com.au) This small company runs relaxed minibus trips across the Nullarbor. Laid-back camping and hostel-style trips between Adelaide and Perth (seven/nine days \$770/990) include bushwalking, surfing, whale watching, accommodation, national park entry fees and almost all meals. Swimming with sea lions and dolphins is also possible.

Oz Experience (☎ 1300 300 028; www.ozexperience.com) This is one of those hop-on, hop-off services you will either love or hate. In the past many travellers have complained about seat availability and a boozy culture, while others rave about it as a highly social experience. The Oz Experience network covers central, northern and eastern Australia. Travel is one-directional and passes are valid for up to six months with unlimited stops. A Sydney–Cairns pass is \$500, and from Cairns right around the east coast and up the Centre to Darwin is \$1980 (includes a two-day Kakadu safari).

Wayward Bus Touring Company (☎ 1800 882 823; www.waywardbus.com.au) Most trips with this reputable company allow you to get on or off where you like. The Classic Coast runs between Melbourne and Adelaide via the Coorong and Great Ocean Rd (\$365, 3½ days). The flagship Face the Outback runs between Adelaide and Alice Springs (\$945, eight days) via the Clare Valley, Flinders Ranges, Oodnadatta Track, Coober Pedy and Uluru.

Wild-Life Tours (☎ 1300 661 730; www.wildlifetours.com.au) This company offers various trips ex-Melbourne, including Adelaide and Sydney runs, and you can hop on/hop off along the way. Melbourne to Adelaide in two days is \$190.

Bus Passes

The following Greyhound passes are subject to a 10% discount for members of YHA, VIP, Nomads and other approved organisations, as well as card-carrying seniors/pensioners.

AUSSIE EXPLORER PASS

This popular pass gives you from one to 12 months to cover a set route – there are 23 in all and the validity period depends on the distance of the route. You don't have the go-anywhere flexibility of the Aussie Kilometre Pass (you can't backtrack), but if you can find a route that suits you it generally works out cheaper.

The Aussie Highlights pass allows you to loop around the eastern half of Australia

from Sydney, taking in Melbourne, Adelaide, Coober Pedy, Alice Springs, Darwin, Cairns, Townsville, the Whitsundays, Brisbane and Surfers Paradise for \$1600, including tours of Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Kakadu National Parks. Or there are one-way passes, such as the Aussie Reef & Rock, which goes from Sydney to Alice Springs (and Uluru) via Cairns and Darwin (and Kakadu) for \$1220; the Top End Explorer, which takes in Cairns to Darwin (and Kakadu) for \$555; and the Western Explorer from Perth to Darwin (\$740).

AUSSIE KILOMETRE PASS

This is the simplest pass and gives you a specified amount of travel, starting at 2000km (\$340), going up in increments of 1000km to a maximum of 20,000km (\$2450). It's valid for 12 months and you can travel where and in what direction you please, and stop as many times as you like. For example, a 2000km pass will get you from Cairns to Brisbane, 4000km (\$620) from Cairns to Melbourne, and 12,000km (\$1520) will cover a loop from Sydney through Melbourne, Adelaide, central Australia, Darwin, Cairns and back to Sydney. On the west coast you'll need 3000km to go from Perth to Broome and 5000km from Perth to Darwin.

Phone at least a day ahead to reserve a seat if you're using this pass, and bear in mind that side trips or tours off the main route (eg to Kakadu, Uluru or Shark Bay) may be calculated at double the actual kilometre distance.

Classes

There are no separate classes on buses, and the vehicles of the different companies all look pretty similar and are equipped with air-con, toilets and videos. Smoking isn't permitted on Australian buses.

Costs

Following are the average, nondiscounted, one-way bus fares on some well-travelled Australian routes.

Route	Adult/Child/Concession
Adelaide-Darwin	\$530/440/480
Adelaide-Melbourne	\$60/50/55
Brisbane-Cairns	\$235/195/215
Canberra-Melbourne	\$80/70/75
Canberra-Sydney	\$35/30/30
Sydney-Brisbane	\$120/100/105
Sydney-Melbourne	\$75/60/70

Reservations

Over summer, school holidays and public holidays, book well ahead on the more popular routes, including intercity and east-coast services. Make a reservation at least a day in advance if you're using a Greyhound pass.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

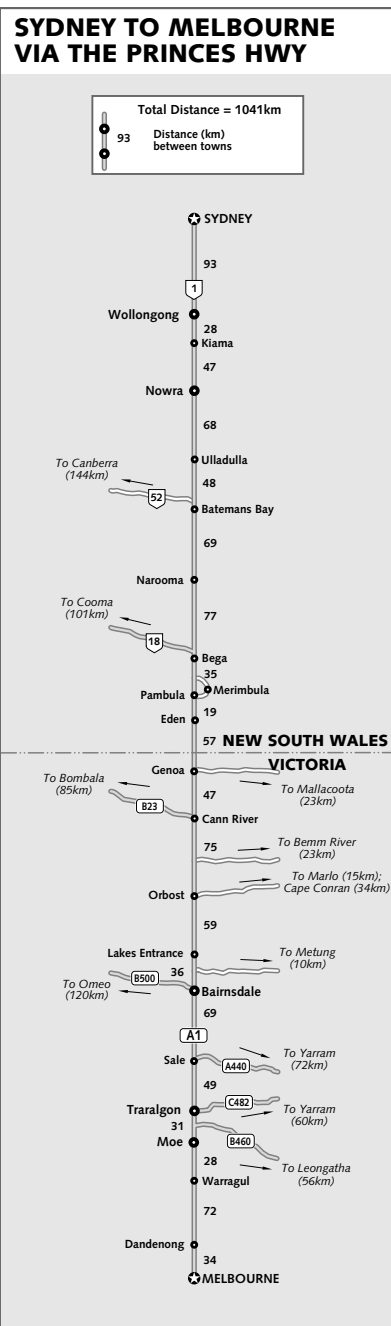
Australia is a vast, mostly sparsely populated country where public transport is often neither comprehensive nor convenient, and can sometimes be nonexistent. Anyone whose experience of Australia is limited to travelling the east coast might hotly dispute this, but on the whole it's true. Many travellers find that the best way to see the place is to purchase a car, and it's certainly the only way to get to those interesting out-of-the-way places without taking a tour.

Motorcycles are another popular way of getting around. The climate is good for bikes for much of the year, and the many small trails from the road into the bush lead to perfect spots to spend the night. Bringing your own motorcycle into Australia will entail an expensive shipping exercise, valid registration in the country of origin and a *Carnet de passages en douanes* – this is an internationally recognised customs document that allows the holder to import their vehicle without paying customs duty or taxes. To get one, apply to a motoring organisation/association in your home country. You'll also need a rider's licence and a helmet. A fuel range of 350km will cover fuel stops up the Centre and on Hwy 1 around the continent. The long, open roads are tailor-made for large-capacity machines above 750cc.

Fuel & Spare Parts

Fuel (predominantly unleaded and diesel) is available from service stations sporting well-known international brand names. LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) is not always stocked at more remote roadhouses; if you're on gas it's safer to have dual-fuel capacity.

Prices vary from place to place but basically fuel is heavily taxed and continues to hike up, much to the disgust of local motorists. Unleaded petrol is now hovering between \$1.20 and \$1.45. Once out into the country, prices soar – in outback Northern Territory (NT) and Queensland they can go as high as \$1.80 a litre. Distances between fill-ups can be long in the outback but there are only a handful of tracks where you'll require a long-range fuel



tank. On main roads there'll be a small town or roadhouse roughly every 150km to 200km. Note, though, that while many roadhouses on main highways are open 24 hours, this does not apply to every fuel stop and you can't always rely on a service station being open in the dead of night.

The further you get from the cities, the better it is to be in a Holden or a Ford. If you're in an older vehicle that's likely to require a replacement part, life is much simpler if it's a make for which spare parts are more readily available. VW Kombi vans were once the quintessential backpackers' wheels, but they're notoriously bad for breaking down and difficult to find parts for, and so are a poor choice for remote Australia.

Hire

For cheaper alternatives to the car-hire prices charged by big-name international firms, try one of the many local outfits. Remember, though, that if you want to travel a significant distance you will want unlimited kilometres, and that cheap car hire often comes with serious restrictions. Also see p77 for more information about renting a car.

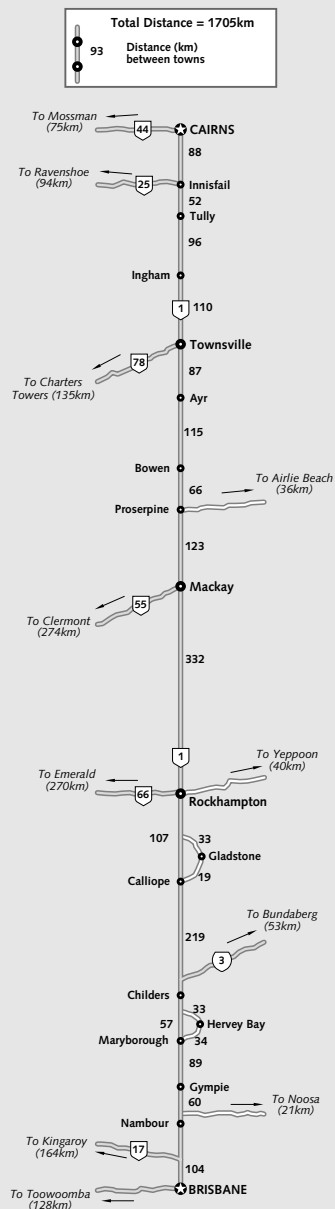
4WD & CAMPERVAN HIRE

A small 4WD like a Suzuki Vitara or Toyota Rav4 is \$85 to \$100 a day. A Toyota Landcruiser is at least \$150, which should include insurance and some free kilometres (100km to 200km a day, or sometimes unlimited).

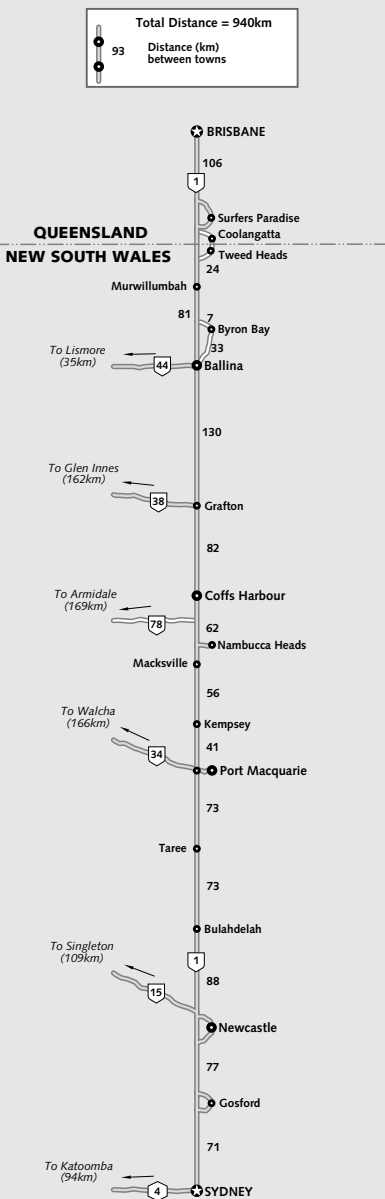
Check the insurance conditions carefully, especially the excess, as it can be onerous – in the NT \$5000 is typical, but this can often be reduced to around \$1000 (or even to nil) by paying an extra daily charge (around \$50). Even for a 4WD, insurance offered by most companies may not cover damage caused travelling 'off-road', meaning anywhere that isn't a maintained bitumen or dirt road.

Hertz, Budget and Avis have 4WD rentals, with one-way rentals possible between the eastern states and the NT. **Britz Rentals** (☎ 1800 331 454; www.britz.com.au) hires out fully equipped 2WD and 4WD campervans. Rates start from around \$50 (two-berth) or \$65 (four-berth) per day for a minimum hire of five days (with unlimited kilometres), but the price escalates dramatically in peak season. It costs an extra \$53 per day to reduce the insurance excess from \$5000 to a few hundred dollars. One-way rentals are also possible.

BRISBANE TO CAIRNS VIA THE BRUCE HWY



SYDNEY TO BRISBANE VIA THE PACIFIC HWY



Many other places rent campervans, especially in Tasmania and the Top End. Check out **Backpacker Campervans** (☎ 1800 670 232; www.backpackercampervans.com).

Insurance

In Australia, third-party personal injury insurance is included in the vehicle registration cost, ensuring that every registered vehicle carries at least minimum insurance. We recommend extending that minimum to at least third-party property insurance – minor collisions can be amazingly expensive.

When it comes to hire cars, understand your liability in the event of an accident. Rather than risk paying out thousands of dollars, you can take out your own comprehensive car insurance or (the usual option) pay an additional daily amount to the rental company for an ‘insurance excess reduction’ policy. This reduces the excess you must pay in the event of an accident from between \$2000 and \$5000 to a few hundred dollars.

Be aware that if travelling on dirt roads you will not be covered by insurance unless you have a 4WD. Also, most companies’ insurance won’t cover the cost of damage to glass (including the windscreen) or tyres.

Outback Travel

You can drive all the way around Australia on Hwy 1 and through the Centre from Adelaide to Darwin without leaving sealed roads. However, if you really want to see outback Australia, there are plenty of routes that breathe new life into the phrase ‘off the beaten track’.

While you may not need 4WD or fancy equipment to tackle most of these roads, you

do need to be carefully prepared for the isolation and lack of facilities. Vehicles should be in good condition and have reasonable ground clearance. Always carry a tow rope so that some passing good Samaritan can pull your broken-down car to the next garage.

When travelling to very remote areas, such as the central deserts, it’s advisable to carry a high-frequency (HF) radio transceiver equipped to pick up the Royal Flying Doctor Service bases. A satellite phone and Global Positioning System (GPS) finder can also be handy. Of course, all this equipment comes at a cost, but travellers have perished in the Australian desert after breaking down.

Always carry plenty of water. In warm weather allow 5L per person per day and an extra amount for the radiator, carried in several containers.

Do not attempt the tougher routes during the hottest part of the year (October to April inclusive) – apart from the risk of heat exhaustion, simple mishaps can lead to tragedy at this time. Conversely, there’s no point going anywhere on outback dirt roads if there has been recent flooding. Get local advice before heading off into the middle of nowhere.

If you do run into trouble in the back of beyond, don’t wander off – stay with your car. It’s easier to spot a car than a human from the air, and you wouldn’t be able to carry a heavy load of water very far anyway. SA police suggest you carry two spare tyres (for added safety) and, if stranded, try to set fire to one of them (let the air out first) – the pall of smoke will be seen for miles.

For more precautions for driving in the outback, see p81.

OUTBACK ROAD SHOW

On many outback highways you’ll see thundering road trains – huge trucks (a prime mover plus two or three trailers) up to 50m long. These things don’t move over for anyone and it’s like something out of a *Mad Max* movie to have one bearing down on you at 120km/h. When you see a road train approaching on a narrow bitumen road, slow down and pull over – if it has to put its wheels off the road to pass you, the resulting shower of stones will almost certainly smash your windscreen. When trying to overtake one, allow plenty of room (about a kilometre) to complete the manoeuvre. Road trains throw up a lot of dust on dirt roads, so if you see one coming it’s best to pull over and stop until it’s gone past.

And while you’re on outback roads, don’t forget to give the standard bush wave to oncoming drivers – it’s simply a matter of lifting the index finger off the steering wheel to acknowledge your fellow motorist.

INTERSTATE QUARANTINE

When travelling in Australia, whether by land or air, you'll come across signs (mainly in airports, in interstate train stations and at state borders) warning of the possible dangers of carrying fruit, vegetables and plants (which may be infected with a disease or pest) from one area to another. Certain pests and diseases – such as fruit fly, cucurbit thrips, grape phylloxera and potato cyst nematodes, to name a few – are prevalent in some areas but not in others, and so for obvious reasons authorities would like to limit them spreading.

There are quarantine inspection posts on some state borders and occasionally elsewhere. While quarantine control often relies on honesty, many posts are staffed and officers are entitled to search your car for undeclared items. Generally they will confiscate all fresh fruit and vegetables, so it's best to leave shopping for these items until the first town past the inspection point.

such as fan belts and radiator hoses, are worth carrying if you're travelling in places where traffic is light and garages are few and far between.

Motorcyclists should beware of dehydration in the dry, hot air – carry at least 5L of water on remote roads in central Australia and drink plenty of it, even if you don't feel thirsty. If riding in Tasmania (a top motorcycling destination) or southern or eastern Victoria, you should be prepared for rotten weather in winter and rain at any time of the year. It's worth carrying some spares and tools even if you don't know how to use them, because someone else often does. Carry a workshop manual for your bike and spare elastic (octopus) straps for securing your gear.

See p1003 for road hazards to be aware of while driving in Australia.

Road Rules

Australians drive on the left-hand side of the road and all cars are right-hand drive. An important road rule is 'give way to the right' – if an intersection is unmarked (unusual), you must give way to vehicles entering the intersection from your right.

The general speed limit in built-up areas is 60km/h, but this has been reduced to 50km/h (and in some cases 40km/h) on residential streets in most states – keep an eye out for signs. Near schools, the limit is 40km/h in the morning and afternoon. On the open highway it's usually 100km/h or 110km/h. In the NT there's no speed limit outside built-up areas, except along the Lasseter Hwy to Uluru, where the limit is 110km/h. The police have speed radar guns and cameras and are fond of using them in strategically concealed locations.

Oncoming drivers who flash their lights at you may be giving you a friendly warning of a speed camera ahead, or they may be telling you that your headlights are not on. It's polite to wave back if someone does this. Try not to get caught doing it yourself, since it's illegal.

All new cars in Australia have seat belts back and front and it's the law to wear them; you're likely to get a fine if you don't. Small children must be belted into an approved safety seat.

Drink-driving is a real problem, especially in country areas. Serious attempts to reduce the resulting road toll are ongoing and random breath-tests are not uncommon in built-up areas. If you're caught with a blood-alcohol level of more than 0.05% expect a hefty fine and the loss of your licence.

PARKING

One of the major problems with driving around cities like Sydney and Melbourne (or popular tourist towns like Byron Bay) is finding somewhere to park. Even if you do find a spot there's likely to be a time restriction, meter (or ticket machine) or both. It's one of the great orts in Australia that for overstaying your welcome (even by five minutes) in a space that may cost only a few dollars to park in, local councils are prepared to fine you anywhere from \$50 to \$120. Also note that if you park in a 'clearway' your car will be towed away or clamped – look for signs. In the cities there are large multistorey car parks where you can park all day for between \$10 and \$25.

Many towns in NSW have a peculiar form of reverse-angle parking, a recipe for disaster if ever there was one. If in doubt, park your car in the same direction and at the same angle as other cars.

HITCHING

Hitching is never entirely safe in any country in the world, and we don't recommend it. Travellers who decide to hitch should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk. People who do choose to hitch will be safer if they travel in pairs and let someone know where they are planning to go.

In Australia, the hitching signal can be a thumbs up or a downward-pointed finger.

TRAIN

Long-distance rail travel in Australia is something you do because you really want to – not because it's cheaper or more convenient, and certainly not because it's fast. That said, trains are more comfortable than buses, and on some of Australia's long-distance train journeys the romance of the rails is alive and kicking. The *Indian Pacific* across the Nullarbor Plain and the *Ghan* from Adelaide to Darwin are two of Australia's great rail journeys.

Rail services within each state are run by that state's rail body, either government or private – see the introductory transport section of the relevant state or territory chapter for details.

The three major interstate services in Australia are operated by **Great Southern Railways** (☎ 13 21 47; www.gsr.com.au), namely the *Indian Pacific* between Sydney and Perth, the *Overland* between Melbourne and Adelaide, and the *Ghan* between Adelaide and Darwin via Alice Springs.

Costs

Following are some standard one-way train fares. Note that 'rail saver' tickets are non-refundable, no changes are permitted, they are only available on travel seats and payment has to be made at the time of the booking.

Adelaide–Darwin Adult/child/rail saver in a travel seat \$700/460/430, from \$1390/1025 in a cabin.

Adelaide–Melbourne Adult/child/rail saver in a travel seat \$90/55/60, from \$140/100 in a cabin.

Adelaide–Perth Adult/child/rail saver in a travel seat \$395/190/245, from \$1005/610 in a cabin.

Brisbane–Cairns \$205 per adult (economy seat).

Canberra–Melbourne \$65 per adult (economy seat); involves a bus ride from Canberra to Cootamundra, then a train to Melbourne.

Canberra–Sydney \$35 per adult (economy seat).

Sydney–Brisbane \$125 (economy seat).

Sydney–Melbourne \$75 per adult (economy seat).

Sydney–Perth Adult/child/rail saver in a travel seat \$600/325/260, from \$1320/860 in a cabin.

Reservations

As the railway-booking system is computerised, any station (other than those on metropolitan lines) can make a booking for any journey throughout the country. For reservations call ☎ 13 22 32; this will connect you to the nearest main-line station.

Discounted tickets work on a first-come, first-served quota basis, so it helps to book in advance.

Train Passes

The **Great Southern Railways Pass** (☎ 13 21 47; www.gsr.com.au), which is available only to non-Australian residents equipped with a passport, allows unlimited travel on the rail network for a period of six months. The pass costs \$690/590 per adult/concession (relatively inexpensive considering the amount of ground you could cover over the life of the pass), but note that you'll be travelling in a 'Daynighter' reclining seat and not a cabin. You need to prebook all seats at least 24 hours in advance.

CountryLink (☎ 13 22 32; www.countrylink.info) is a rail and coach operation that visits destinations in NSW, the ACT, Queensland and Victoria, and offers two passes to foreign nationals with valid passports. The East Coast Discovery Pass allows one-way economy travel between Melbourne and Cairns (in either direction) with unlimited stopovers, and is valid for six months – the full trip costs \$470, while Sydney to Cairns is \$380 and Brisbane to Cairns is \$270. The Backtracker Rail Pass allows for travel on the entire CountryLink network and has four versions: a 14-day/one-/three-/six-month pass costing \$235/275/300/420 respectively.

Health

Dr David Millar

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Healthwise, Australia is a remarkably safe country in which to travel, considering that such a large portion of it lies in the tropics. Tropical diseases such as malaria and yellow fever are unknown; diseases of insanitation such as cholera and typhoid are unheard of. Thanks to Australia's isolation and quarantine standards, even some animal diseases such as rabies and foot-and-mouth disease have yet to be recorded.

Few travellers to Australia will experience anything worse than an upset stomach or a bad hangover, and, if you do fall ill, the standard of hospitals and health care is high.

BEFORE YOU GO

Since most vaccines don't produce immunity until at least two weeks after they're given, visit a physician four to eight weeks before departure. Ask your doctor for an International Certificate of Vaccination (otherwise known as 'the yellow booklet'), which will list all the vaccinations you've received. This is mandatory for countries that require proof of yellow fever vaccination upon entry (sometimes required in Australia, see Required & Recommended Vaccinations, right), but it's a good idea to carry a record of all your vaccinations wherever you travel.

Bring medications in their original, clearly labelled containers. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing your medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

INSURANCE

If your health insurance doesn't cover you for medical expenses abroad, consider getting extra insurance – check www.lonelyplanet.com for more information. Find out in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or if it will reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures. (In Australia, as in many countries, doctors expect payment at the time of consultation. Make sure you get an itemised receipt detailing the service and keep the contact details of the health provider. See p1053 for details of health care in Australia.

REQUIRED & RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

If you're entering Australia within six days of having stayed overnight or longer in a yellow fever-infected country, you'll need proof of yellow fever vaccination. For a full list of these countries visit the **World Health Organization** (WHO; www.who.int/wer) or **Centers for Disease Control & Prevention** (www.cdc.gov/travel) websites.

If you're really worried about health when travelling, there are a few vaccinations you could consider for Australia. The WHO recommends that all travellers should be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella, chickenpox and polio, as well as hepatitis B, regardless of their destination. Planning to travel is a great time to ensure that all routine vaccination cover is complete. The consequences of these diseases can be severe, and while Australia has high levels of childhood vaccination coverage, outbreaks of these diseases do occur.

MEDICAL CHECKLIST

- Antibiotics
- Antidiarrhoeal drugs (eg loperamide)
- Acetaminophen (paracetamol) or aspirin

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- Anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)
- Antihistamines (for hayfever and allergic reactions)
- Antibacterial ointment in case of cuts or abrasions
- Steroid cream or cortisone (for poison ivy and other allergic rashes)
- Bandages, gauze, gauze rolls
- Adhesive or paper tape
- Scissors, safety pins, tweezers
- Thermometer
- Pocket knife
- DEET-containing insect repellent for the skin
- Permethrin-containing insect spray for clothing, tents and bed nets
- Sun block
- Oral rehydration salts
- Iodine tablets or water filter (for water purification)

INTERNET RESOURCES

There is a wealth of travel health advice to be found on the internet. For further information, **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com) is a good place to start. The **WHO** (www.who.int/ith) publishes a superb book called *International Travel and Health*, which is revised annually and is available online at no cost. Another website of general interest is **MD Travel Health** (www.mdtravelhealth.com), which provides complete travel health recommendations for every country and is updated daily.

It's usually a good idea to consult your government's travel health website before departure, if one is available:

Australia (www.dfat.gov.au/travel)

Canada (www.travelhealth.gc.ca)

UK (www.dh.gov.uk) Click on 'Policy and guidance', then scroll down to 'Health advice for travellers'.

USA (www.cdc.gov/travel)

FURTHER READING

Lonely Planet's *Healthy Travel Australia, New Zealand & the Pacific* is a handy, pocket-sized guide packed with useful information including pre-trip planning, emergency first aid, immunisation and disease information, and what to do if you get sick on the road. *Travel with Children*, from Lonely Planet, includes advice on travel health for younger children. Other recommended references include *Traveller's Health* by Dr Richard Dawood (Oxford University Press) and *International Travel*

Health Guide by Stuart R Rose, MD (Travel Medicine Inc).

IN TRANSIT

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Blood clots may form in the legs (deep vein thrombosis, or DVT) during plane flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility. The longer the flight, the greater the risk. Though most blood clots are reabsorbed uneventfully, some may break off and travel through the blood vessels to the lungs, where they could cause life-threatening complications.

The chief symptom of DVT is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle or calf, usually – but not always – on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and breathing difficulties. Travellers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To prevent the development of DVT on long flights, you should walk about the cabin, perform isometric compressions of the leg muscles (ie flex the leg muscles while sitting), drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol and tobacco.

JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS

Jet lag is a common problem when crossing more than five time zones, and it results in insomnia, fatigue, malaise or nausea. To avoid jet lag, try drinking plenty of (nonalcoholic) fluids and eating light meals. On arrival, expose yourself to sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep etc) as soon as possible.

Antihistamines such as dimenhydrinate and meclizine are usually the first choice for treating motion sickness. Their main side effect is drowsiness. A herbal alternative is ginger, which works like a charm for some people.

IN AUSTRALIA

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Health insurance is essential for all travellers. While health care in Australia is of a high standard and not overly expensive by international standards, considerable costs can build up and repatriation is extremely expensive. Make sure your existing health insurance will cover you – if not, organise extra insurance.

Australia has an excellent health-care system. It's a mixture of privately run medical clinics and hospitals alongside a system of public hospitals funded by the Australian government. There are excellent specialised, public health facilities for women and children in Australia's major centres.

The Medicare system covers Australian residents for some of their health-care costs. Visitors from countries with which Australia has a reciprocal health-care agreement are eligible for benefits specified under the Medicare programme. There are agreements currently in place with New Zealand, the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Italy, Malta and Ireland – check the details before departing from these countries. In general, the agreements provide for any episode of ill-health that requires prompt medical attention. For further information, visit www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/content/ozhealth-visitors.

Over-the-counter medications are widely available at privately owned chemists throughout Australia. These include painkillers, antihistamines for allergies, and skin-care products.

You may find that medications readily available over the counter in some countries are only available in Australia by prescription. These include the oral contraceptive pill, most medications for asthma and all antibiotics. If you take medication on a regular basis, bring an adequate supply and ensure you have details of the generic name as brand names may differ between countries.

Health Care in Remote Areas

In Australia's remote locations, it is possible there'll be a significant delay in emergency services reaching you in the event of serious accident or illness. Do not underestimate the vastness between most major outback towns; an increased level of self-reliance and preparation is essential.

Consider taking a wilderness first-aid course, such as those offered at the **Wilderness Medicine Institute** (www.wmi.net.au). Take a comprehensive first-aid kit that is appropriate for the activities planned, and ensure that you have adequate means of communication. Australia has extensive mobile phone coverage but additional radio communication is important for remote areas. The **Royal Flying Doctor Service** (www.rfds.org.au) provides an important back-up for remote communities.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Bat Lyssavirus

This disease is related to rabies and some deaths have occurred after bites. The risk is greatest for animal handlers and vets. The rabies vaccine is effective, but the risk of travellers contracting bat lyssavirus is very low.

Dengue Fever

Dengue fever occurs in northern Queensland, particularly from October to March, during the wet season. Also known as 'breakbone fever', because of the severe muscular pains that accompany it, this viral disease is spread by a species of mosquito that feeds primarily during the day. Most people recover in a few days but more severe forms of the disease can occur, particularly in residents who are exposed to another strain of the virus (there are four types) in a subsequent season.

Giardiasis

Giardiasis is widespread in waterways around Australia. Drinking untreated water from streams and lakes is not recommended. Use water filters and boil or treat water with iodine to help prevent the disease. Symptoms consist of intermittent bad-smelling diarrhoea, abdominal bloating and wind. Effective treatment is available (tinidazole or metronidazole).

Hepatitis C

This is still a growing problem among intravenous drug users. Blood transfusion services fully screen all blood before use.

HIV

In Australia, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) rates have stabilised and levels are similar to other Western countries. Clean needles and syringes are widely available at all chemists.

Malaria

Although isolated cases have occurred in northern Queensland, malaria is not an ongoing problem in Australia. The risk to travellers is low.

Meningococcal Disease

This disease occurs worldwide and is a risk if you have prolonged stays in dormitory-style accommodation. A vaccine exists for some types of this disease, namely meningococcal

A, C, Y and W. There is no vaccine presently available for the viral type of meningitis.

Ross River Fever

The Ross River virus is widespread throughout Australia and is spread by mosquitoes living in marshy areas. In addition to fever, it causes headache, joint and muscular pains and a rash, and resolves after five to seven days.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

Rates of STD infection are similar to most other Western countries. The most common symptoms are pain while passing urine, and a discharge. Infection can be present without symptoms, so seek medical screening after any unprotected sex with a new partner. Throughout the country you'll find sexual health clinics in all of the major hospitals. Always use a condom with any new sexual partner. Condoms are readily available in chemists and through vending machines in many public places, including toilets.

Tick Typhus

Cases of tick typhus have been reported throughout Australia, but are predominantly found in Queensland and New South Wales. A week or so after being bitten, a dark area forms around the bite, followed by a rash and possible fever, headache and inflamed lymph nodes. The disease is treatable with antibiotics (doxycycline), so see a doctor if you suspect you have been bitten.

Viral Encephalitis

Also known as Murray Valley encephalitis virus, this is spread by mosquitoes and is most common in northern Australia, especially during the wet season (October to March). This potentially serious disease is normally accompanied by headache, muscle pains and sensitivity to light. Residual neurological damage can occur and no specific treatment is available. However, the risk to most travellers is low.

TRAVELLERS' DIARRHOEA

Tap water is universally safe in Australia. All water other than tap water should be boiled, filtered or chemically disinfected (with iodine tablets) to prevent travellers' diarrhoea and giardia.

If you develop diarrhoea, be sure to drink plenty of fluids – preferably an oral rehydra-

tion solution containing lots of salt and sugar. A few loose stools don't require treatment but if you start having more than four or five stools a day, you should begin taking an antibiotic (usually a quinolone drug) and an anti-diarrhoeal agent (such as loperamide). If diarrhoea is bloody, persists for more than 72 hours or is accompanied by fever, shaking chills or severe abdominal pain, you should seek medical attention.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Bites & Stings

MARINE ANIMALS

Marine spikes, such as those found on sea urchins, stonefish, scorpion fish, catfish and stingrays, can cause severe local pain. If this occurs, immediately immerse the affected area in hot water (as high a temperature as can be tolerated). Keep topping up with hot water until the pain subsides and medical care can be reached. The stonefish is found only in tropical Australia, from northwestern Australia around the coast to northern Queensland. An antivenin is available.

Marine stings from jellyfish such as box jellyfish and Irukandji also occur in Australia's tropical waters, particularly during the wet season (October to March). The box jellyfish and the Irukandji have an incredibly potent sting and have been known to cause fatalities. Warning signs exist at affected beaches, and stinger nets are in place at the more popular beaches. Never dive into water unless you have checked – with local beach life-savers – that it's safe. 'Stinger suits' (full-body Lycra swimsuits) prevent stinging, as do wetsuits. If you are stung, first aid consists of washing the skin with vinegar to prevent further discharge of remaining stinging cells, followed by rapid transfer to a hospital; antivenin is widely available.

SHARKS & CROCODILES

Despite extensive media coverage, the risk of shark attack in Australian waters is no greater than in other countries with extensive coastlines. There's also low risk of an attack by tropical sharks on scuba divers in northern Australian waters. Great white sharks are now few in number in the temperate southern waters. Check with surf life-saving groups about local risks.

The risk of crocodile attack in tropical northern Australia is real but predictable

and largely preventable. Discuss the local risk with police or tourist agencies in the area before swimming in rivers, water holes and in the sea.

SNAKES

Australian snakes have a fearful reputation that is justified in terms of the potency of their venom, but unjustified in terms of the actual risk to travellers and locals. Snakes are usually quite timid in nature and, in most instances, will move away if disturbed. They have only small fangs, making it easy to prevent bites to the lower limbs (where 80% of bites occur) by wearing protective clothing (such as gaiters) around the ankles when bushwalking. The bite marks are very small and may even go unnoticed.

In all cases of confirmed or suspected bites, preventing the spread of toxic venom can be achieved by applying pressure to the wound and immobilising the area with a splint or sling before seeking medical attention. Firmly wrap an elastic bandage (you can improvise with a T-shirt) around the entire limb, but not so tight as to cut off the circulation. Along with immobilisation, this is a life-saving first-aid measure.

SPIDERS

Australia has a number of poisonous spiders. The Sydney funnel-web spider causes severe local pain, as well as generalised symptoms (vomiting, abdominal pain, sweating). An antivenin exists, so apply pressure to the wound and immobilise the area before transferring to a hospital.

Redback spiders are found throughout the country. Bites cause increasing pain at the site, followed by profuse sweating and generalised symptoms (including muscular weakness, sweating at the site of the bite, nausea). First aid includes application of ice or cold packs to the bite, then transfer to hospital.

White-tailed spider bites may cause an ulcer that is very slow and difficult to heal. Clean the wound thoroughly and seek medical assistance.

Heat Exhaustion & Heatstroke

Very hot weather is experienced all year round in northern Australia and during the summer months for most of the country. Conditions vary from tropical in the Northern Territory and Queensland to hot desert in

northwestern Australia and central Australia. When arriving from a temperate or cold climate, remember that it takes two weeks for acclimatisation to occur. Before the body is acclimatised, an excessive amount of salt is lost in perspiration, so increasing the salt in your diet is essential.

Heat exhaustion occurs when fluid intake does not keep up with fluid loss. Symptoms include dizziness, fainting, fatigue, nausea or vomiting. The skin is usually pale, cool and clammy. Treatment consists of rest in a cool, shady place and fluid replacement with water or diluted sports drinks.

Heatstroke is a severe form of heat illness that occurs after fluid depletion or extreme heat challenge from heavy exercise. This is a true medical emergency, with heating of the brain leading to disorientation, hallucinations and seizures. Prevent heatstroke by maintaining an adequate fluid intake to ensure the continued passage of clear and copious urine, especially during physical exertion.

A number of unprepared travellers die from dehydration each year in outback Australia. This can be prevented by following some simple rules:

- Carry sufficient water for any trip, including extra in case your vehicle breaks down.
- Always let someone, such as the local police, know where you are going and when you expect to arrive.
- Carry communications equipment of some form.
- Stay with your vehicle rather than walking for help.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia is a significant risk, especially during the winter months in southern parts of Australia. Despite the absence of high mountain ranges, strong winds produce a high chill factor that can result in hypothermia even in moderately cool temperatures. Early signs include the inability to perform fine movements (such as doing up buttons), shivering and a bad case of the 'umbles' (fumbles, mumbles, grumbles, stumbles). The key elements of treatment include moving out of the cold, changing out of any wet clothing into dry clothes with windproof and waterproof layers, adding insulation and providing fuel (water and carbohydrate) to allow shivering, which builds the internal temperature. In severe

hypothermia, shivering actually stops – this is a medical emergency requiring rapid medical attention in addition to the above measures.

Insect-Borne Illnesses

Various insects can be a source of irritation and, in Australia, may be the source of specific diseases (dengue fever, Ross River fever). Protection from mosquitoes, sandflies, ticks and leeches can be achieved by a combination of the following strategies:

- Wearing loose-fitting, and long-sleeved clothing.
- Application of 30% DEET to all exposed skin and repeating every three to four hours.
- Impregnation of clothing with permethrin (an insecticide that kills insects but is believed to be safe for humans).

Surf Beaches & Drowning

Australia has exceptional surf, particularly on the eastern, southern and western coasts. Beaches vary enormously in their underwater conditions: the slope offshore can result in changeable and often powerful surf. Check with local surf life-saving organisations and be aware of your own expertise and limitations before entering the water.

Ultraviolet (UV) Light Exposure

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. Monitor your exposure to direct sunlight closely. Ultraviolet exposure is greatest between 10am and 4pm, so avoid skin exposure during these times. Always use 30+ sunscreen; apply it 30 minutes before going into the sun and repeat applications regularly to minimise damage.

Glossary

AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH

Any visitor from abroad who thinks that Australian (that's 'Strine') is simply a weird-sounding variant of English is in for a surprise. The colloquial language may mean you'll be lost in a strange maze of Australian words. The meaning of some words in Australia is completely different from that in other English-speaking countries – some commonly used words have been shortened almost beyond recognition, while others are derived from Aboriginal languages, or from the slang used by early convict settlers.

If you want to pass for an Aussie, just try speaking slightly nasally, shortening any word of more than two syllables and then adding a vowel to the end of it, making anything you can into a diminutive and peppering your speech with expletives.

Lonely Planet's *Australian Phrasebook* is an introduction to both Australian English and some Aboriginal languages. The list that follows may also help.

ACT – Australian Capital Territory

Akubra hat – Traditional Australian bushman's hat now seen more frequently atop retired German tourists.

arvo – afternoon

Aussie rules – Australian Rules football; a game resembling rugby, played by teams of 18

B&B – 'bed and breakfast' accommodation

back o' Bourke – back of beyond, middle of nowhere, *outback*

Banana Bender – resident of Queensland

barbie – barbecue; also BBQ

bastard – general form of address which can mean many things, from high praise or respect ('He's the bravest bastard I know!') to dire insult ('You bastard!'); avoid use if unsure

bathers – swimming costume (in Victoria)

battler – struggler, someone who tries hard

beaut, beauty, bewdie – great, fantastic

bevan – see *bogan* (in Queensland)

billabong – waterhole in a riverbed formed by waters receding in the *Dry*

billy – tin container used to boil water in the *bush*

block, do your – lose your temper

bloke – man

blowies, blow flies – large flies

bludger – lazy person, one who refuses to work

blue – argument or fight

body board – half-sized surf board, *boogie board*

bogan – unsophisticated person

bonzer – great, *ripper*

boogie board – see *body board*

boomer – very big; a particularly large male kangaroo

boomerang – a curved, flat, wooden instrument used by Aborigines for hunting

booner – see *bogan* (in ACT)

booze bus – police van used for random breath testing for alcohol

brekky – breakfast

Buckley's – no chance at all

bull dust – fine, sometimes deep, dust on *outback* roads; also bullshit

bullroarer – instrument often used in Aboriginal men's initiation ceremonies; a long piece of wood on a string swung around the head to create an eerie roar

bunyip – mythical bush spirit

burl – have a try ('give it a burl')

bush, the – country, anywhere away from the city

bushranger – Australia's equivalent of the outlaws of the American Wild West

BYO – 'bring your own'; a restaurant licence permitting customers to drink *grog* they've purchased elsewhere

camp oven – large, cast-iron pot with lid; used for cooking on an open fire

cask wine – wine packaged in a plastic bladder surrounded by a cardboard box (a great Australian invention)

chiga – see *bogan* (in Tasmania)

chocka – completely full, from 'chock-a-block'

chook – chicken

chuck a U-ey – make a U-turn, turn a car around within a road

clap stick – percussion instrument used in Aboriginal societies, either sticks (one or two) or a pair of boomerangs

cllobber – to hit; clothes

c'mon – encouragement in an endeavour; usually heard at the sidelines at a sporting event

cobber – see *mate* (archaic)

cooe – a long, loud high-pitched call

corroboree – Aboriginal festival or gathering for ceremonial or spiritual reasons

counter meal – pub meal

cozzie – swimming costume (in New South Wales)

crack a mental, crack the shits – lose one's temper

crook – ill or substandard

Crow Eater – resident of South Australia

crikey – an exclamation of surprise, as in 'crikey these shorts are tight!'

dag – dirty lump of wool at a sheep's rear; also an affectionate or mildly abusive term for a socially inept person

daks – trousers, *strides*

damper – bush loaf made from flour and water, often cooked in a *camp oven*

dead horse – tomato sauce

dead set – true, *dinkum*

deli – see *milk bar* (in South Australia and Western Australia); also delicatessen

didgeridoo – wind instrument made from a hollow piece of wood, traditionally played by Aboriginal men

digger – soldier; see also *mate*

dilly bag – Aboriginal carry bag

dinkum – honest, genuine

dinky-di – the real thing

donga – small, transportable building widely used in the *outback*

Dreamtime – complex concept that forms the basis of Aboriginal spirituality, incorporating the creation of the world and the spiritual energies operating around us; 'Dreaming' is often the preferred term as it avoids the association with time

drongo – worthless or stupid person

dropbear – imaginary Australian bush creature

Dry, the – dry season in northern Australia (April to October)

dunny – outdoor lavatory

earbash – to talk nonstop

Esky – large insulated ice chest for keeping food and drinks cold

fair dinkum – see *dinkum*

fair go! – give us a break!

flat out – very busy or fast

flog – sell; steal

football, footy – for Mexicans, Crow Eaters, Taswegians and Sand Gropers: Aussie Rules. For Banana Benders and Cockroaches: rugby league. Almost never soccer.

fossick – hunt for gems or semiprecious stones

freshie – freshwater crocodile (usually harmless, unless provoked); new *tinny* of beer

galah – noisy parrot, thus noisy idiot

gander – to look ('have a gander')

g'day – good day, traditional Australian greeting

grazier – large-scale sheep or cattle farmer

grog – general term for alcoholic drinks

hicksville – derogatory term usually employed by urbanites to describe a country town

hoon – idiot, hooligan

icy pole – frozen lollipop, ice lolly

iffy – dodgy, questionable

indie – independent music and film

jackaroo – male trainee on an *outback station*

jillaroo – female trainee on an *outback station*

journo – journalist

jumped-up – self-important, arrogant

kali – jumbo-sized boomerang

karri – Australian eucalyptus tree

kiwi – New Zealander

knacker – testicle

knackered – broken, tired

knock – to criticise, deride

knocker – one who *knocks*; woman's breast

Kombi – a classic (hippies') type of van made by Volkswagon

Koories – Aboriginal people of southeastern Australia

Kooris – Aboriginal people of New South Wales

lamington – square of sponge cake covered in chocolate icing and desiccated coconut

larrikin – hooligan, mischievous youth

lemon – faulty product, a dud

little ripper – extremely good thing

loo – toilet

mate – general term of familiarity, correctly pronounced 'maaaaate'

Mexicans – Victorians

milk bar – small shop selling milk and other basic provisions; see also *deli*

mobile phone – cell phone

mozzies – mosquitoes

Murri – collective term used to identify Aborigines from Queensland

musos – musicians

never-never – remote country in the *outback*

no-hoper – hopeless case

no worries! – No problems! That's OK!

Noongar – collective term used to identify Aborigines from Western Australia

NSW – New South Wales

NT – Northern Territory

Nunga – collective term used to identify Aborigines from South Australia

ocker – uncultivated or boorish Australian; a *knocker* or derider

oi oi oi – the second stanza of the traditional Australian ballad that starts 'Aussie Aussie Aussie'

outback – remote part of the *bush*, *back o' Bourke*

pavlova – traditional Australian meringue, fruit and cream dessert, named after Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova; also 'pav'

pay out – to make fun of, deride

perve – to gaze with lust

piker – someone who doesn't pull their weight, or chickens out

piss – beer

piss up – boozy party

piss weak – no good, gutless

pissed – drunk

pissed off – annoyed

plonk – cheap wine

pokies – poker machines

Pom – English person

pot – medium beer glass (in Victoria and Tasmania); beer gut; to sink a billiard ball

Queenslander – high-set weatherboard house, noted for its wide veranda

rarrk – cross-hatching designs used in Arnhem Land paintings and body art

rathbag – friendly term of abuse

ratshit – lousy

rego – vehicle registration

ridgy-didge – original, genuine

ring-in – substitute or outsider

rip – a strong ocean current or undertow

ripper – good; see also *little ripper*

road train – semitrailer truck towing several trailers

roos – kangaroos

root – to have sexual intercourse

rooted – tired, broken

ropable – very bad-tempered or angry

RSL – Returned Servicemen's League or community venue operated by same

SA – South Australia

saltie – saltwater crocodile (the dangerous one)

Sand Groper – resident of Western Australia

schooner – large beer glass (in New South Wales and South Australia)

session – lengthy period of heavy drinking

shark biscuit – inexperienced surfer

sheila – woman

she'll be right – no problems, no worries

shellacking – comprehensive defeat

shonky – unreliable

shoot through – to leave in a hurry

shout – to buy a round of drinks ('Your shout!')

skimpy – scantily clad female bar person

slab – two dozen *stubbies* or *tinnies*

smoko – tea break

snag – sausage

sparrow's fart – dawn

station – large farm

stickybeak – nosy person

stolen generations – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children forcibly removed from their families during the government's policy of assimilation

strides – trousers, *daks*

stroppy – bad-tempered

stubby – 375mL bottle of beer

sundowner – alcoholic drink consumed at sunset

surf 'n' turf – a slab of steak topped with seafood, usually served in pubs

swag – canvas-covered bed roll used in the *outback*; a large amount

tackers – young children

take the piss – friendly derision

tall poppies – achievers (*knockers* like to cut them down)

tea – evening meal

thingo – thing, whatchamacallit, doovelacki,

thingamajig

thongs – flip-flops, an *ocker's* idea of formal footwear

tinny – 375 mL can of beer; small aluminium fishing dinghy

tjukurpa – Aboriginal law, religion and custom

toastie – toasted sandwich

togs – swimming costume (in Queensland and Victoria)

Top End – northern part of the Northern Territory

true blue – see *dinkum*

tucker – food

two-pot screamer – person unable to hold their drink

two-up – traditional heads-or-tails coin gambling game

ute – utility; pick-up truck

WA – Western Australia

wag – to skip school or work

walkabout – lengthy solitary walk

weatherboard – timber cladding on a house

Wet, the – rainy season in the north (November to March)

whoop-whoop – *outback*, miles from anywhere

wobbly – disturbing, unpredictable behaviour

woomera – stick used by Aborigines to propel spears

wowser – someone who doesn't believe in having fun, spoilsport, teetotaler

yabbie – small freshwater crayfish

yobbo – uncouth, aggressive person

yonks – a long time

youse – plural form of 'you' (pronounced 'yooze'), used by the grammatically challenged

The Authors



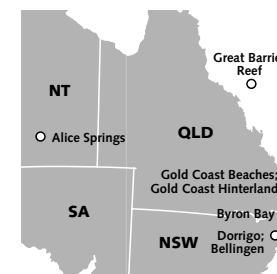
JUSTINE VAISUTIS **Coordinating Author, NSW, ACT, Victoria: Melbourne**

Justine is hopelessly devoted to her native country and revels in any chance to explore it. Even for work. Her love affair with Australian beaches began on the New South Wales coast, when she was barely old enough for swimmers. Updating NSW was a good excuse to revisit her favourite shoreline (in swimmers) and noodle through the backroads of the mid- and north-coast hinterlands. Researching her home town of Melbourne also provided ample opportunities to further her addictions to coffee, beer, food and live music.

This is Justine's 12th Lonely Planet guide and her fifth contribution to an Australian title. She works part time for the Australian Conservation Foundation when she's in town.

My Favourite Trip

It changes with the seasons, but my year-round favourite trip would involve rainforests, good honest pubs and plenty of coast. I'd start in the mid-NSW hinterland, losing myself in the national parks around Dorrigo (p210) and Bellingen (p212) for a spell. Then I'd climb to the beaches around Byron Bay (p194) and the southern stretch of the Gold Coast (p327) and park myself on the shoreline. I'd nip into the Gold Coast Hinterland (p336) for hilly bushwalks, and then shoot up to the north to go diving in the Great Barrier Reef (p390). I'd leave the water just before transmogrification into a human prune was complete and take a long and dusty drive through the outback to finish up in Alice Springs (p838).



BECCA BLOND **Queensland: Sunshine Coast, Darling Downs, Fraser Coast, Capricorn Coast, Outback, Whitsunday Coast**

Becca achieved two personal milestones in 2006: she travelled (accompanied by her fiancé and Lonely Planet writing partner Aaron Anderson) to all five continents in one year and lost her Australian virginity with two visits in six months, the second time to research a portion of Queensland for this book.

Becca travels the globe for Lonely Planet pretty much full time, but when she's not on the road she lives in Boulder, Colorado, with Aaron and their bulldog Duke.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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**LINDSAY BROWN****South Australia: Barossa Valley, Mid-North, Murray River, Flinders Ranges, Outback**

A former conservation biologist and Publishing Manager of Outdoor Activity Guides at Lonely Planet, Lindsay enjoys nothing more than heading to the outback and Australia's heartland. As a Lonely Planet author Lindsay has contributed to several titles including *Australia, Queensland & the Great Barrier Reef, East Coast Australia, Northern Territory & Central Australia, and Sydney & New South Wales*.

**TERRY CARTER****Western Australia**

An ex-Queenslander, Terry jumped at the chance to head into the wilderness of WA, and to check out WA's secret surfing spots. Having erroneously concluded that travel writing was a glamorous occupation, he's been writing for years across Europe and the Middle East. Clocking 12,000km of research for this guide, Terry would happily turn around and do it again, without the suicidal kangaroos next time. Terry has a masters degree in media studies and divides his time between travel writing, photography and overcoming paranoia induced by sharks being spotted off Freo.

**GEORGE DUNFORD****Victoria: Great Ocean Road, Around Melbourne**

Moving to Melbourne after an overseas exile, George relished the chance to see his adopted state under the microscope. When he's not writing books for Lonely Planet – including *Micronations* and *Southeast Asia on a Shoestring* – he works as a freelance writer penning articles for the *Age*, *Wanderlust* and *Get Lost!*

**LARA DUNSTON****Western Australia**

It made sense that Lara's first Aussie gig for Lonely Planet would be WA. Her first flight was from Sydney to Perth and her last big trip down under was with her family through the Pilbara and Kimberley. That's when she fell for Broome, with its azure sea and red desert sands, the same things she finds appealing about the UAE, her home since 1998. A travel writer working in the Middle East and Europe, Lara owes her travel addiction to her parents Warren, who died of cancer, and Tracy, who survived an accident in Perth in 2006. She thanks them for those years caravanning around Australia.

**SIMONE EGGER****Northern Territory, The Culture**

Simone freelances as a writer, editor and photographer in Melbourne. She's clocked up hundreds of thousands of kilometres covering Australia for a dozen Lonely Planet guidebooks. For this book she headed up the guts researching the NT, and analysed thousands of words, notes, pictures, plays, manoeuvres and movements to uncover the essence of 'the Australians' for the Culture chapter. Simone also wrote the 'Whisper Quiet Wittenoom' boxed text (p945) for WA.

**KATJA GASKELL****Queensland: Brisbane, Moreton Bay, Gold Coast, Gold Coast Hinterland**

After another dreary London winter, Katja packed her bags to see what all the Australian fuss was about. Nearly two years later and she's not been disappointed; although she still can't surf, cook a barbie or understand AFL. On this trip Katja explored sunny Queensland where she fell in love with North Stradbroke Island and dreamt of buying a rustic retreat in the Gold Coast Hinterland. When not trucking around for Lonely Planet, Katja lives in Sydney with her husband and freelances for a number of national magazines.

**ROWAN MCKINNON****Victoria: Country Victoria**

Rowan is a Melbourne-based freelance writer and musician. He was born in Traralgon in country Victoria, so it was a fitting return for him to research regional Victoria through the dairy and grazing country of his forebears and relatives. Having travelled to and worked in many far-flung corners of the globe, Rowan found the 6000km he travelled around Victoria in a station wagon with his partner and their two kids was a voyage of rediscovery. Rowan is a veteran author of many Lonely Planet books, specialising in the island states of the South Pacific.

**ALAN MURPHY****South Australia: Adelaide, Fleurieu, Yorke & Eyre Peninsulas, Kangaroo Island, Southeast, West Coast**

Alan saw Buenos Aires' boulevards flashing by during his first walk around Adelaide's wide streets and city squares. A Latin dream it may not be, but the city and its location was a stroke of brilliance. Alan loved travelling around this vast, wondrous state, especially the wilderness wonderland of Kangaroo Island. Highlights included the penguins in the garden of his hostel in Peneshaw, camping in Innes National Park, crushing the Poms in the third test cricket match and fishing the Coorong. Delighted with this opportunity, Alan always finds writing about his home country a unique challenge.

**CHARLES RAWLINGS-WAY****Tasmania**

The son of a Devonshire flour miller and a Belfast belle, Charles was falsely convicted of stealing two potatoes and transported to Van Diemen's Land at the age of three. A free man on the open road, Charles funded his adventures with stints as an architect, croissant chef, deck hand, cinema cleaner and crucial cog at Lonely Planet's Melbourne HQ. An underrated rock guitarist and optimistic home renovator, Charles keeps one eye on his next trip to Tasmania, and the other on fellow Lonely Planet wordsmith Meg Worby (who's very easy on the eye).

**SARAH WINTLE****Queensland: North Coast, Gulf Savannah, Far North Queensland, Cape York Peninsula**

There's a recurring theme of tropical heat in Sarah's life, having just returned from Thailand when she set off to cover Queensland's North Coast and Far North. This trip combined her favourite things: mangoes, green frogs, frangipani and yoga, on the beach. Where else can you throw spears with indigenous Australians or meet reef sharks and call it work? This trip proved her homeland is not 'down under' but definitely 'up top'. When not working for NGOs, Sarah has contributed to *Southeast Asia on a Shoestring*, *The Travel Book* and *Blue List* among other titles. Sarah is Melbourne born and bred.

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Kenny Bedford updated the Cape York and Torres Strait information (p459). He has also worked with Lonely Planet TV as a researcher and photographer on the *Going Bush 2* series. Kenny lives on the island of Erub in Torres Strait.

Bob Brown wrote 'Deforestation in Tasmania' (p692). Bob was elected to the Tasmanian parliament on the first day after his release from Risdon Prison, during the Franklin Dam blockade in 1983. He was first elected to the Senate in 1996. His books include *Memo for a Saner World* (Penguin, 2004) and a guide to the Styx River forests with Vica Bayley, entitled *The Valley of the Giants* (The Wilderness Society, 2005).

Michael Cathcart wrote the History chapter. Michael teaches history at the Australian Centre, University of Melbourne. He is well known as a broadcaster on ABC Radio National and presented the ABC TV series *Rewind*. He is also noted as the man who abridged Australia's best-known historian, Manning Clark, by turning his six-volume classic, *A History of Australia*, into one handy book.

Tim Flannery wrote the Environment chapter. Tim is a naturalist, explorer and writer. He is the author of a number of award-winning books, including *The Future Eaters* and *Throwim Way Leg* (an account of his adventures as a biologist working in New Guinea) and the landmark ecological history of North America, *The Eternal Frontier*. Tim lives in Adelaide where he is director of the South Australian Museum and a professor at the University of Adelaide.

Alan Fletcher wrote the 'Just for *Neighbours* Fans' boxed text (p495). Alan has worked in every branch of the performing arts for 30 years. He has played Dr Karl Kennedy on *Neighbours* since 1994.

Huw Fowles wrote 'Not So Regal Regattas' (p47). He would have loved to have written more about beer and sport but he suffers from a small attention span and a large predilection to get hands-on with the aforementioned subjects. He also 'works' in Lonely Planet's Melbourne office.

Kyla Gillzan wrote *Driving Australia* (p73). She has worked on a number of Lonely Planet titles as an editor, and is married to a first-class mechanic who keeps her on the road.

Steve Kinnane wrote the 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander History: Our Collective Cultures and Hopeful Futures' boxed text (p40). Steve is a writer and researcher who has worked on a variety of community-based cultural heritage projects and has published on history, social justice and sustainability. Steve was born in Perth and is a descendent of the Miriwoong people of the East Kimberley. He lectured at Murdoch University in Australian Indigenous Studies and Sustainability, and is currently a Visiting Research Fellow at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), Canberra. He is working on a major project examining the sustainability of the Kimberley region of WA.

Chris Klep, IT manager at Lonely Planet Melbourne, contributed to the *Driving Australia* chapter (p73). With a 4WD and off-road camper-trailer, and with kids in tow, Chris' holidays are spent exploring new and remote locations in Oz, the latest epic being three months in the NT and northern WA.

Catherine Le Nevez contributed to the *Driving Australia* chapter (p73). While finishing up her doctorate in writing, she embarked on what turned into a 65,000km road trip that took her to far-flung corners of Oz (and through two cyclones). Among other recent road-tripping adventures, Catherine has dodged snowstorms in Bavaria, moose in Newfoundland, and scooters in Italy.

Tristan Mungatopi wrote the 'Community Art Centres in the Tiwis' boxed text (p813). Currently living in Melbourne, he has lived at Milikapiti on Melville Island, and Nguuu on Bathurst Island, as well as in Darwin and Victoria. Undertaking a masters degree in linguistics at Monash University, he has a special interest in language endangerment issues and is actively involved in many Aboriginal organisations. Awarded an inaugural Indigenous Youth Leadership Program Scholarship by the Foundation for Young Australians and the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training in 2006, he plans to return to the NT at the end of these studies and work for the development and prosperity of his people in the areas of language maintenance, education and politics.

Thanks also to Jasmine Foxlee (boxed text, 'The Sorry Rocks Story', p864), Stephen and Prue Henschke (boxed text, 'Henschke's Eden', p744), Katie Horner (boxed text, 'The Chocolate Snowball', p502), Wendy Kramer (boxed text, 'Thunderbolt', p210), Simon Sellars (boxed text, 'The Great Pie Wars: Best Pies on the Coast', p168), Andrew Tudor (boxed text, 'Where to Surf in Australia', p534) and Penny Watson (boxed text, 'Thredbo Tragedy', p244).

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