

Directory

CONTENTS

Accommodation	366
Activities	369
Business Hours	369
Children	370
Climate Charts	370
Customs & Quarantine	370
Dangers & Annoyances	371
Discount Cards	373
Embassies & Consulates	373
Festivals & Events	374
Food	375
Gay & Lesbian Travellers	375
Holidays	376
Insurance	376
Internet Access	376
Legal Matters	377
Maps	377
Money	377
Photography & Video	378
Post	378
Solo Travellers	378
Telephone	378
Time	379
Toilets	379
Tourist Information	380
Travellers with Disabilities	380
Visas	380
Women Travellers	380
Volunteering	382

ACCOMMODATION

It's not difficult to get a good night's sleep in New South Wales (NSW), which offers everything from the tent-pegged confines of camping grounds and the communal spaces of hostels to gourmet breakfasts in guesthouses and at-your-fingertip resorts, plus the gamut of hotel and motel lodgings.

The accommodation listings in this book are in order of price, starting with budget, then midrange, and finishing with top-end categories. Prices quoted are for high season and we generally treat any place that charges up to \$50 per single or \$100 per double as budget accommodation. Midrange facilities are usually in the range of \$100 to \$180 per

double per night. The top-end tag is applied to places charging more than \$180 per double. Sydney is generally more expensive than the rest of the state, particularly for anything other than a hostel. Midrange options there can cost up to \$200 per double and the sky's the limit for top-end hotels. Conversely, in the regions out west, particularly Back o' Bourke, the Central West and The Riverina, you'll be able to get a decent midrange room for \$60.

In most areas you'll find seasonal price variations. 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 useful discounts and lower walk-in rates can be found.

The weekend escape is a notion that figures prominently in the Australian psyche, meaning accommodation from Friday night through Sunday can be in greater demand (and pricier) in major holiday areas. High-season prices are quoted in this guidebook unless otherwise indicated. For more information on climatic seasons and holiday periods, see p15.

B&Bs

The local bed and breakfast (B&B) or guest-house birth rate is climbing rapidly, and the options are diverse. In areas that attract weekenders – quaint historic towns, wine regions and accessible forest regions such as the Blue Mountains – B&Bs are often up-market and will charge premium rates if you want to stay between Friday and Sunday in high season (assuming you can even get in). Tariffs are typically in the \$80 to \$150 (per double) bracket.

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 lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

PRACTICALITIES

- The *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Daily Telegraph* and the national *Australian* and *Financial Review* are newspapers available throughout NSW. The *Bulletin* is one of Australia's best current affairs magazines, with features, editorials, travel, technology and more. *Australian Geographic* produces a quarterly magazine to illuminate the environment's issues and diversity. *Australian Gourmet Traveller* focuses on Australian food, wine and restaurants with a travel bent. The bi-monthly *Australian Traveller* is a relatively new kid on the magazine stand, but it's chunky and informative about all things travel in Oz.
- Nationwide there are three commercial TV networks – Seven, Nine and Ten – which screen mostly Australian and US content. The government-sponsored ABC and SBS are far more multicultural. The ABC also provides a number of nationwide radio stations, and has excellent coverage in rural Australia where commercial stations are lacking.
- Videos use the PAL system and DVDs use the PAL-B system.
- For weights and measures, the metric system is used.
- Power plugs have two angled pins; the electricity supply is 220-240V AC, 50Hz.

Local tourist offices can usually give you a list of places. Online sources:

australianbandb.com.au (www.australianbandb.com.au) Information and booking site for B&B accommodation.
babs.com.au (www.babs.com.au) Information and booking site for B&B and self-contained accommodation.
OZBedandBreakfast.com (www.ozbedandbreakfast.com) Comprehensive listing of B&Bs throughout Australia. Good site for specials.

Camping & Caravan Parks

Pitching a tent is not only the cheapest way to travel, but also the most sustainable. Camping and caravanning are exceedingly popular in Australia, and parks with excellent facilities are prolific. The nightly cost of an unpowered site for two people is usually somewhere between \$13 and \$25. Camping in the bush is a highlight of travelling in Australia. In places like the outback you often won't even need a tent, and the nights spent around a camp fire under the stars are unforgettable. Stays at designated camp sites in national parks normally cost between \$3 and \$8 per person. When it comes to urban camping, remember that most city camping grounds are miles away from the centre of town, especially in Sydney.

Most caravan parks are good value, with almost all equipped with hot showers, flushing toilets, laundry facilities and, occasionally, a pool. Many have old on-site caravans for rent, but these are largely being replaced by on-site cabins. Cabin sizes and facilities vary, but expect to pay \$60 to \$100 per night for a cabin with a kitchenette for two people.

Useful websites:

Big 4 Holiday Parks (www.big4.com.au) Lists caravan and camping sites throughout Australia.
Caravan and Camping Network (www.caravancampnetwork.com.au) Online booking system for caravan and camping parks.

Farmstays

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 horse riding. Check out **Australian Farmstays** (www.australiafarmstay.com.au) for your options. You can also get your hands dirty in organic dirt with **Willing Workers on Organic Farms** ([☎ 03-5155 0218](http://03-5155 0218); www.wwoof.com.au).

Hostels

Backpacker hostels line the New South Wales coast, particularly in major tourist centres. Highly social affairs, they're generally overflowing with 18- to 30-year-olds, but some are reinventing themselves as 'inns' or 'guest-houses' to attract other travellers who simply want to sleep for cheap.

Typically a dorm bed costs \$19 to \$26 per night and a double (usually without bathroom) \$60. NSW also has dozens of hostels that are part of the Youth Hostels Association (YHA; [☎ 02-9261 1111](http://02-9261 1111); www.yha.com.au), which is part of the **International Youth Hostel Federation** (IYHF; www.hihostels.com), also known as Hostelling International (HI). For a discounted YHA rate, international travellers should purchase

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. 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. But the distinction between well-meaning and well-marketed can be blurry in other instances. 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. See www.ecotourism.org.au for their eco-certification program.
- Green Globe 21 is a benchmarking certification scheme for all sectors in the tourism industry, working towards a standard for companies and communities. See greenglobe21.com.
- Sustainable Travel International has developed an eco-certification program. See www.sustainabletravelinternational.org.
- The Green Building Council of Australia has a greenstar rating for buildings (examining design and construction). See www.gbcaus.org.

an HI card in their country of residence, or from a major local YHA hostel at a cost of \$37 for 12 months. Australian residents can become full YHA members for \$52/85 for one/two years.

More useful international hostel organisations include the following:

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; 3/41 Steele Pl, Morningside, Qld 4170) 12-month membership is \$43 and entitles you to many discounts.

Hotels & Motels

Except for pubs (right), hotels in cities or places visited by lots of tourists are generally of the business or luxury variety, where you get a generically comfortable room in a multistorey block. These places tend to have a pool and restaurant/café.

For comfortable midrange accommodation that's available all over NSW, motels (or motor inns) are the places to stay in. Most motels are modern, low-rise and have similar facilities (tea and coffee, fridge, TV, air-con, bathroom), but the price will indicate the standard. You'll mostly pay between \$60 and \$130 for a room.

Useful booking agencies that can save you some dosh:

Lastminute.com (www.au.lastminute.com) British site offering special deals on travel and entertainment. Good for international travellers heading to Australia.

Quickbeds.com (www.quickbeds.com.au) Booking site for accommodation with some great deals.

Wotif.com (www.wotif.com.au) Booking site for discounted accommodation.

Pubs

In country towns, pubs are invariably found in the town centre. Many were built during boom times, so they're often among the largest and most extravagant buildings in town. In tourist areas some have been restored as heritage buildings, but generally the rooms remain small and old-fashioned, with a long amble down the hall to the bathroom. You can sometimes rent a single room at a country pub for not too much more than a hostel dorm, but if you're a light sleeper, never (ever) book a room above the bar.

Standard pubs have singles/doubles with shared facilities starting from around \$40/55. Few have a separate reception area – just ask in the bar if there are rooms available.

Rental Accommodation

Self-contained holiday flats are another mainstay on the NSW 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 multnight stays.

If you're interested in a shared flat or house for a long-term stay, delve into the classified advertisements sections of the daily newspapers; Wednesday and Saturday are usually the best days. Noticeboards in universities, hostels, bookshops and cafés are also good to check out.

Useful websites:

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

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

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

ACTIVITIES

NSW offers abundant activities; see the New South Wales Outdoor chapter (p40) for greater detail on featured activities.

Aerial Pursuits

Skydiving, paragliding and hang-gliding enthusiasts can build themselves from up high in Wollongong (p321) and Manilla (p227), which has some of the best conditions in the world for paragliding. In the Southeast, there's powered hang-gliding on offer in Tumut (p309), and on the North Coast, gliding, hang-gliding and skydiving are all the rage in Byron Bay (p189).

Diving

Sydney has many good spots for shore dives (p64), including Gordons Bay, Shark Point, and Ship Rock. Popular boat dive sites are Wedding Cake Island, Sydney Heads and off Royal National Park. Elsewhere in NSW, the waters around Jervis Bay (p329), and Merimbula's wreck of the Empire Gladstone (p339) are among the more popular.

On the North Coast, there is good diving in Port Stephens (p158), the Solitary Islands Marine Park (p179) and the Julian Rocks Marine Reserve off Byron Bay (p189).

Diving outfits typically offer four-day dive courses from the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI; www.padi.com) from around \$350.

Fishing

Fishing is a way of life for many coastal towns in NSW, but you'll generally need to have your own gear with you. Boat hire is easy to find in fishing towns such as Yamba (p182), Ballina (p185) and Tweed Heads (p194).

On the South Coast popular fishing haunts include Batemans Bay (p332), Narooma (p334), Bermagui (p337) and Merimbula (p339).

There's fabulous lake fishing in the Monaro Tablelands' Lake Eucumbene (p305) and Jindabyne (p307).

The Namoi River and Lake Keepit near Manilla (p226) in New England are touted as some of the best fishing spots in the state.

The **NSW Department of Primary Industries** (www.dpi.nsw.gov.au) publishes the helpful *Salt-water Recreational Fishing in NSW* brochure, which details fishing rules and regulations for the coast.

Mountain Biking & Cycling

NSW is a pedal-pusher's utopia and it's not uncommon to see mountain bikers carting their whole kit and caboodle about on multi-week rides. City-cyclers will appreciate the excellent network of paths in Canberra (p354). But the best cycling is done off-road on a mountain bike. The national parks around Sydney (p109) and the Blue Mountains (p119) offer stunning challenges. In the southeast, mountain biking is a warm-weather favourite in Thredbo (p300), and new tracks are being laid in Tumut State Forest (p309). See Mountain-Biking & Cycling in the New South Wales Outdoor chapter (p42) and the Bicycle section of the Transport chapter (p387) for more destinations and information.

Swimming

See the relevant regional chapters for coverage of NSW beaches and how to get to them.

Trekking

There are countless bushwalking and trekking opportunities in NSW. Major walks for experienced hikers include the Royal National Park's 28km Coastal Walking Trail (p109) and the 21km glacial lakes walk in Kosciuszko National Park (p295). Reeeeally keen walkers can indulge in the 250km Great North Walk (p138) from Sydney to Newcastle, or the 440km Hume and Hovell Walking Track (p309) between Yass and Albury.

Most folk will be happy with the shorter tracks that cover anything from 500m to 7km in the state's prolific national parks. See Bushwalking in the NSW Outdoors chapter (p40) for more destinations.

BUSINESS HOURS

Most shops and businesses open around 9am, and close at 5pm or 6pm Monday to Friday and at either noon or 5pm on Saturday. Sunday trading is increasingly common, and you'll encounter it in popular tourist haunts. In larger towns there is usually late-night

shopping till 9pm on Thursday and/or Friday. Supermarkets are generally open from 7am until at least 8pm and sometimes 24 hours. You'll also find milk bars (general stores) and convenience stores open until late.

Banks are normally open from 9.30am to 4pm Monday to Thursday, and until 5pm 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 newsagencies) and from Australia Post shops in the major cities.

Restaurants typically open at noon for lunch and between 6pm and 7pm for dinner. Restaurants stay open until at least 9pm, but tend to serve food until later in the evening on Friday and Saturday. That said, the main restaurant strips in large cities keep longer hours throughout the week. Cafés tend to be all-day affairs that either close around 5pm or continue their business into the night. Pubs usually serve food from noon to 2pm and from 6pm to 8pm. Pubs and bars often open for drinking at lunchtime and continue well into the evening, particularly from Thursday to Saturday.

CHILDREN Practicalities

All cities and most major towns have centrally located public rooms where parents can go to nurse their baby or change nappies; check with the local tourist office or city council for details. Most Australians have a relaxed attitude about breast-feeding or nappy changing in public.

Many hotels, motels and the better-equipped caravan parks have playgrounds and swimming pools, and can supply cots and baby baths. B&Bs, on the other hand, often market themselves as sanctuaries from all things child-related. Many restaurants, and pubs in particular, have kids meals, or will provide small serves from the main menu. Some also supply highchairs.

To find licensed child-care agencies, check under Baby Sitters and Child Care Centres in the *Yellow Pages* telephone book (or on www.yellowpages.com.au), or phone the local council for a list. Licensed centres are subject to government regulation and usually adhere to high standards.

Child concessions (and family rates) often apply for such things as accommodation,

tours, admission fees, and air, bus and train transport, with some discounts as high as 50% of the adult rate. 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.

Medical services and facilities in NSW are of a high standard, and items such as baby-food formula and disposable nappies are widely available in urban centres. Major hire-car companies will supply and fit booster seats for you for an additional fee. 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 NSW. Every town or city has at least some parkland, or you could head into the countryside for wide-open spaces, bushland or rainforests. Some companies specifically tailor outdoor pursuits for kids, like Kidz Klub in Byron Bay (p187). Similarly the free kids program at the Newcastle Region Art Gallery (p144) and the Red Art Shed at the Moree Plains Gallery (p255) hold weekly kids art classes.

Some surf schools in Byron Bay run camps specifically for kids during school holidays (see p189).

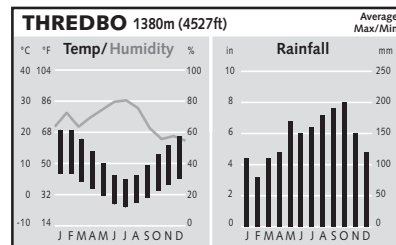
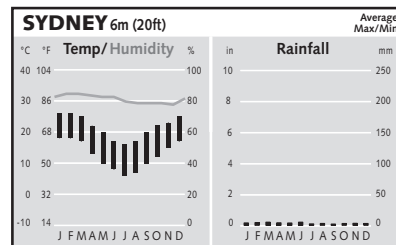
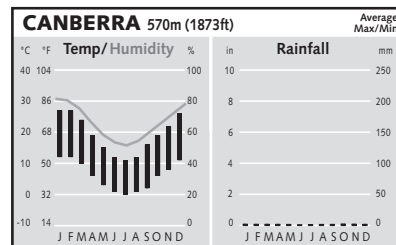
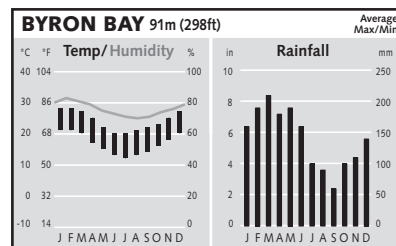
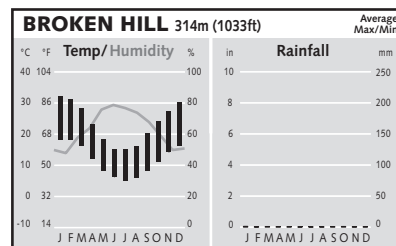
Plenty of museums, zoos, aquariums, interactive technology centres and pioneer villages have historical, natural or science-based exhibits to get kids thinking. For tips on occupying kids in Sydney and Canberra, see p67 and p355 respectively.

CLIMATE CHARTS

The Australian summer starts in December, autumn in March, winter in June and spring in September. The climate in NSW varies depending on the location, but the rule of thumb is that the further north you go, the warmer and more humid it'll be. It's also hotter and drier the further west you go. See *When to Go* (p15) in the *Getting Started* chapter for more information.

CUSTOMS & QUARANTINE

For comprehensive information on customs regulations, contact the **Australian Customs Service** (☎ 1300 363 263; 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.

When arriving or departing the country, you will need to declare all animal and plant material (wooden spoons, straw hats, the lot) and show them to a quarantine officer. The authorities are naturally keen to protect Australia's unique environment and important agricultural industries by preventing weeds, pests or diseases 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 (see boxed text, p396).

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 undertake a first-hand investigation of conditions in Australian jails, don't bring illegal drugs in with you. Customs authorities are adept at searching for these 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 an on-the-spot fine or prosecution which may result in fines and up to 10 years imprisonment. For more information on quarantine regulations contact the **Australian Quarantine & Inspection Service** (AQIS; www.aqis.gov.au).

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

For emergencies, dial ☎ 000.

Animal Hazards

Australia's profusion of dangerous creatures is legendary, and although it does have an abundance of poisonous snakes, spiders and politicians, the chances of actually encountering any in NSW (with the exception of Canberra with its politicians) is extremely low. Hospitals have antivenin on hand for all common snake and spider bites, but it helps to know what it was that bit you. In the case of politics the only course of action is to suck firmly on an egg.

Australia has also had its share of shark attacks, although again it's worth noting that a) it is an island and more importantly b) there have only been three fatal shark attacks in NSW since 1970. Beaches in greater Sydney, Wollongong, Newcastle and the central coast, covering some 200km of coast, have contentious shark nets set at least 13 days per month, which have sadly resulted in the death of thousands of marine creatures.

INSECTS

For four to six months of the year you'll have to cope with those 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 and some coastal areas.

Mozzies are a problem in summer, especially near wetlands in tropical areas, and some species are carriers of viral infections; see p402. Try to keep your arms and legs covered as soon as the sun goes down and make liberal use of insect repellent.

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 make like the Beatles and *let it be*.

For information on treating snake bites, see p401.

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. It has an especially nasty set of fangs. Another eight-legged critter to stay away from is the black one with a distinctive red stripe on its body, called the redback spider; for bites, apply ice and seek medical attention. For more on spider bites, see p401.

Bushfires & Blizzards

As has been dramatically illustrated in recent times, bushfires are a regular occurrence in NSW. Don't be the mug who starts one. 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.

The most dangerous season is usually from 1 October to 31 March when open-air fires are restricted, but it has been known to start as early as mid-September. On days of extreme fire danger a total fire ban will be declared and campfires, solid-fuel barbecues, ovens and kettles are prohibited. Locals will not be amused if they catch you breaking this law; they'll happily do you in, and the penalties are severe.

Bushwalkers should seek local advice before setting out. When a total fire ban is in place, delay your 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 very 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. Areas with a high density of eucalypts, such as the ACT and the Blue Mountains, are particularly prone to bush fires. Eucalyptus oil (which the trees produce in abundance) is highly flammable as are dead bark and fallen branches. Many species of eucalypts are actually dependent on fire to regenerate, and bushfires sweep through eucalypt forests at a frightening pace.

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 NSW can occur at almost any time of the year, even in January. Exposure in even moderately cool temperatures can sometimes result in hypothermia – for more information on hypothermia and how to minimise its risks, see p401.

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 and Byron Bay get a dishonourable mention when it comes to theft, so keep an extra-vigilant eye on your belongings.

Driving

Australian drivers are generally a courteous bunch, but risks can be posed by rural petrol heads, inner-city speedsters and, particularly, drunk drivers. For more information on these and other potential dangers see Road Hazards on p394.

BETWEEN THE FLAGS

On any popular ocean beach in Australia during summer you'll probably find a pair of poles stuck in the sand about 200m apart, each with a red-and-yellow flag on them. They signify that the area of the beach between the flags is patrolled by surf lifeguards. It also means that the area outside the flags may not be safe for swimming because of undertows and currents. If you swim between the flags, help should arrive quickly if you get into trouble; raise your arm (and yell!) if you need help. Outside the flags and on unpatrolled beaches you are, more or less, on your own.

Australia has a strong tradition of surf life-saving, with regular carnivals in which super-fit athletes compete in a series of events such as swimming, surf kayaking and running. The most well-known competition is the Iron Man series. There are surf life-saving clubs all along the east coast and most of the lifeguards are volunteer members.

Swimming

Popular beaches are patrolled by surf lifeguards, and patrolled areas are marked by flags (for details see the boxed text, above). 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.

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 airfares.

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

France Paris (☎ 01-4059 3300; www.france.embassy.gov.au; 4 Rue Jean Rey, 75724 Paris Cedex 15)

Germany Berlin (☎ 030-880088-0; www.germany.embassy.gov.au; Wallstrasse 76-79 Berlin 10179) Also in Frankfurt.

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

Japan Tokyo (☎ 03-5232 4111; www.australia.or.jp; 2-1-14 Mita, Minato-Ku, Tokyo 108-8361) Also in Osaka, Nagoya and Fukuoka City.

Netherlands The Hague (☎ 070-310 8200; www.austrian-embassy.nl; Carnegieplein 4, The Hague 2517 KH)

New Zealand Auckland (☎ 09-921 8800; Level 7, Price Waterhouse Coopers Bldg, 186-194 Quay St, Auckland);

Wellington (☎ 04-473 6411; www.newzealand.embassy.gov.au; 72-78 Hobson St, Thorndon, Wellington)

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

South Africa Pretoria (☎ 12-423 6000; www.australia.co.za; 292 Orient Street, Arcadia, Pretoria 0083)

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

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

Embassies & Consulates in Australia

The principal diplomatic representations to Australia are in Canberra.

Canada (Canberra (Map p346; ☎ 02-6270 4000; www.dfait-maedi.gc.ca/australia; Commonwealth Ave, Canberra, ACT 2600); Sydney (☎ 02-9364 3000; Level 5/111 Harrington St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

France (Canberra (Map p346; ☎ 02-6216 0100; www.ambafrance-au.org; 6 Perth Ave, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (☎ 02-9261 5779; Level 26, St Martins Tower, 31 Market St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

Germany (Canberra (Map p346; ☎ 02-6270 1911; www.germanembassy.org.au; 119 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (☎ 02-9328 7733; 13 Trelawney St, Woollahra, NSW 2025)

Ireland (Canberra (Map p346; ☎ 02-6273 3022; irishemb@cyberone.com.au; 20 Arkana St, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (☎ 02-9231 6999; Level 30, 400 George St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

Japan (Canberra (Map p346; ☎ 02-6273 3244; www.japan.org.au; 112 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (☎ 02-9231 3455; Level 34, Colonial Centre, 52 Martin Pl, Sydney, NSW 2000)

Netherlands (Canberra (Map p346; ☎ 02-6220 9400; www.netherlands.org.au; 120 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (☎ 02-9387 6644; Level 23, Tower 2, 101 Grafton St, Bondi Junction, NSW 2022)

New Zealand (Canberra (Map p346; ☎ 02-6270 4211; www.nzembassy.com; Commonwealth Ave, Canberra, ACT 2600); Sydney (☎ 02-8256 2000; Level 10, 55 Hunter St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

Singapore (Canberra (Map p346; ☎ 02-6271 2000; www.mfa.gov.sg/canberra; 17 Forster Cres, Yarralumla, ACT 2600)

South Africa (Canberra (Map p346; ☎ 02-6272 7300; www.sahc.org.au; cnr Rhodes Pl & State Circle, Yarralumla, Canberra, ACT 2600)

UK (Canberra (Map p346; ☎ 02-6270 6666; www.britaus.net; Commonwealth Ave, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (☎ 02-9247 7521; 16th fl, 1 Macquarie Pl, Sydney Cove, NSW 2000)

USA (Canberra (Map p346; ☎ 02-6214 5600; http://us.embassy-australia.state.gov; Moonah Pl, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (☎ 02-9373 9200; Level 10, 19-29 Martin Pl, Sydney, NSW 2000)

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 outback race meetings, which draw together isolated communities. There are also some big city-based street festivals, sporting events and arts festivals that showcase com-

edy, 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 chapters of this book. But the following events occur throughout a particular region, or the state, or even around the country.

January

Big Day Out (www.bigdayout.com) This huge open-air music concert tours Sydney 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.

Summernats Car Festival (www.summernats.com.au) Revheads from around the country gather in Canberra.

Survival Festival The Aboriginal version of Australia Day, also held on 26 January, is marked by Koori music, dance, and arts and crafts displays in Sydney.

Australasian Country Music Festival (www.country.com.au) Held in Tamworth on the Australia Day long weekend, this festival showcases the country's top country and western artists.

February/March

Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras (www.mardigras.org.au) The most colourful event on the Sydney social calendar culminates in a spectacular parade along Oxford St.

National Multicultural Festival (www.multiculturalfestival.com.au) Celebrated over 10 days in Canberra.

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

March

Surfest (www.surfest.com) Australia's longest-running professional surf carnival is held at Newcastle Beach.

Royal Easter Show (www.eastershow.com.au) Livestock contests and rodeos are held in Sydney.

National Folk Festival (www.folkfestival.asn.au) One of the country's largest folk festivals, held in Canberra.

April

East Coast International Blues & Roots Music Festival (www.bluesfest.com.au) Held over Easter in Byron Bay, this international jam attracts high-calibre performers and around 10,000 visitors.

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 people 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.

Splendour in the Grass (www.splendourinthegrass.com) Huge indie music festival in Byron Bay.

September

Mudgee Wine Festival (www.mudgeewines.com.au) Sample Mudgee's finest wine and welcome in the spring at this yearly festival.

Wagga Wagga Jazz Festival (www.waggajazz.org.au) Well-regarded international jazz festival.

October

Bathurst 1000 Motor-racing enthusiasts flock to Bathurst for the annual 1000km touring-car race on the superb Mt Panorama circuit.

Jazz in the Vines (www.jazzinthevines.com.au) Food, wine and jazz in the Hunter Valley.

November

Melbourne Cup On the first Tuesday in November, Australia's premier horse race is run in Melbourne. Many country towns in NSW schedule racing events to coincide with it.

December & January

Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race (www.rolexsydneyhobart.com) One of the world's most gruelling ocean races, starting on 26 December every year.

FOOD

Visitors to NSW enjoy the range and wealth of food available in the state's restaurants, markets, delicatessens (delis) and cafés. In urban and tourist hubs such as Sydney, Canberra, Byron Bay and Newcastle, you'll find excellent fare and plenty of fresh seafood. Many small towns also pride themselves on their gastronomic ability, but in others you'll be dining on simple pub grub and sandwiches. In general, however, the dining is fine, owing to the abundance of reasonably priced fresh produce. Also, many people from different cultures have made their home here, bringing with them a huge range of ethnic cuisines that are now part of the country's culinary repertoire.

Eating listings in this book are in order of price, from cheapest to most expensive. Quality restaurants charge from \$25 to \$40

for a main meal. Best value are modern cafés, ethnic restaurants (mains under \$20), and pub bistros, where you can get a good meal in casual surroundings for under \$20.

For general opening hours, breakfast is normally served between 6am and 11am, lunch starts around noon till about 3pm and dinner usually starts after 6pm. But note that in rural areas, the kitchen may close by 8pm.

It's customary to tip in restaurants and upmarket cafés if the service warrants it – a gratuity of between 5% to 15% of the bill is the norm.

See p45 for full details on NSW's specialities and modern Australian (Mod Oz) cuisine.

Diners 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 and (sometimes only at mealtime) pub dining areas.

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.

In Sydney and along the east coast, there are tour operators, travel agents, resorts and other accommodation places that are either exclusively gay and lesbian, or make a point of welcoming gays. See p71 for more information.

In NSW, certain areas are the focus of the gay and lesbian communities, among them Oxford St and King's Cross in Sydney, the Blue Mountains, Hunter Valley and the South Coast.

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. Homosexual acts are legal in all states but the age of consent between males varies – in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and NSW it's 16 years.

Publications & Contacts

All major cities have gay newspapers, which are available from gay and lesbian venues, and from newsagents in popular gay and lesbian residential areas.

The website of **Gay & Lesbian Tourism Australia** (GALTA; www.galta.com.au) is a good place to look for general information, though you need to become a member to receive the full benefits. **Beyond the Blue** (☎ 02-8399 0070; 685-687 South Dowling St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010) is a tour operator catering to gay and lesbian travellers.

Other helpful websites:

Gay Australia (www.gayaustralia.com.au)

Pinkboard (www.pinkboard.com.au) Sydney-based.

HOLIDAYS

Public Holidays

The following is a list of the main national and state public holidays. 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

School Holidays

The Christmas holiday season, from mid-December to late January, is part of the summer school holidays – it's 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. They fall roughly from early to mid-April, late June to mid-July, and late September to early October.

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. There is a wide variety of policies available, so compare the small print.

Some policies specifically exclude designated 'dangerous activities' such as scuba diving, 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 your having to pay on the spot and claim later. If you have to claim later make sure you keep all documentation. Some policies ask you to call back (reverse charges or collect) to a centre in your home country where an immediate assessment of your problem is made. Check that the policy covers ambulances and emergency medical evacuations by air. Worldwide coverage for travellers from over 44 countries is available online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

See also Insurance (p398) in the Health chapter. For information on insurance matters relating to cars that are bought or rented, see p391.

INTERNET ACCESS

Email and internet access is easy to find in NSW. You'll find internet cafés in cities, sizeable towns and pretty much anywhere that travellers congregate. The average rate is about \$6 an hour, usually with a minimum of 10 minutes' access, although fierce competition in Sydney keeps the cost lower there. Most youth hostels and backpacker places can hook you up, as can many hotels and caravan parks.

Most public libraries have internet access, but generally there are a limited number of terminals and these are provided for research needs, not for travellers to check their emails. Furthermore many libraries require you to join and make a terminal booking, so an internet café is generally easier.

If you're carrying your own laptop, hooking up to the internet is as simple as plugging it into the phone line in your room. You'll need to have a dial-up account with an Internet Service Provider, and ensure that the access number is the cost of a local call throughout NSW (this is fairly common for Australian ISPs). A useful tip is to put 0 (zero), in front of your dial-up number to enable your modem to dial an outside line.

Australia primarily uses the RJ-45 telephone plugs although you may see Telstra EXI-160 four-pin plugs – electronics shops such as Dick Smith sell adaptors.

In this book, this symbol ☐ denotes internet access is available at the respective sleeping or eating option. For useful websites about NSW see p16.

LEGAL MATTERS

Most travellers to NSW will have no contact with the Australian police or any other part of the legal system. Those that do are most 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), check your vehicle for roadworthiness, and also to insist that you take a breath test to check your blood alcohol level – 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, but nonetheless the recording of a conviction against you may affect your visa status.

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.

The legal driving age is 17 and the drinking age is 18.

MAPS

Good-quality road and topographical maps are plentiful in Australia. The NRMA (p390) is a dependable source of road maps especially for rural NSW. Many newsagencies and bookshops sell good maps for surrounding areas. 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 produces a handy fold-out city map of Sydney.

For bushwalking and other outdoor activities for which large-scale maps are essential, browse the topographic sheets put out by **Geoscience Australia** (☎ 1800 800 173, 02-6249 9111; www.ga.gov.au; Cnr Jerrabomberra Ave & Hindmarsh Dr, Symonston, ACT 2609).

MONEY

Changing foreign currency or travellers cheques is usually no problem at banks throughout NSW. Exchange rates are listed in the Quick Reference at the front of this book.

In this book, unless otherwise stated, all prices given in dollars refer to Australian dollars. For an idea of the money required to travel in NSW, see p15.

ATMs & Eftpos

ATMs are common in NSW and are linked to international networks. They are an excellent way to procure local currency and avoid the hassle of carrying travellers cheques or large sums of cash.

Eftpos (Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale) enables you to use your bank card to pay for services or purchases directly, and to withdraw money. Australians use the service liberally and it's available just about anywhere, from the supermarket to the pub. Some places demand a \$10 minimum purchase.

Cash

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.

Credit Cards

MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted. American Express is limited more to major towns and destinations.

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

Taxes & Refunds

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) is a flat 10% tax on all goods and services – accommodation, eating out, transport, electrical, books, furniture, clothing and so on. There are, however, some exceptions, 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.

If you purchase new or second-hand 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 paid. The scheme only applies to goods you take with you as hand luggage, or wear, 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; www.customs.gov.au).

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

Digital cameras, memory sticks and batteries are sold prolifically in Sydney. Electronic stores like Dick Smith will stock everything you need, as will the larger departments stores. The availability of batteries and memory sticks outside of Sydney and Newcastle 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's postal services are efficient and fairly cheap. It costs 50c to send a standard letter or postcard within the country. **Australia Post** (www.auspost.com.au) has two regions for international destinations: Asia-Pacific and Rest of the World; airmail letters up to 50g cost \$1.10/1.65, respectively. The cost of a postcard (up to 20g) is \$1 and an aerogram to any country is 85c. There are five international parcel zones and rates vary by distance and class of service.

All post offices will hold mail for visitors, and some city GPOs (main or general post offices) have very busy poste restante sections. You need to provide some form of identification (such as a passport) to collect mail.

See p369 for post office opening times.

SOLO TRAVELLERS

Solo travellers are a common sight throughout Australia and there is certainly no stigma attached to lone visitors. But in some places there can be an expectation that the visitor should engage in some way with the locals, particularly in rural pubs where keeping to yourself can prove harder than it sounds. Women travelling on their own should exercise caution when in less-populated areas, and will find that guys can get annoyingly attentive in drinking establishments. See also Women Travellers (p380).

TELEPHONE

There are a number of providers offering various services. The two main players are the mostly government-owned **Telstra** (www.telstra.com.au) and the fully private **Optus** (www.optus.com.au). Both are also major players in the mobile (cell) phone market, along with **Vodafone** (www.vodafone.com.au).

Information & Toll-Free Calls

Numbers starting with ☎ 190 are usually recorded information services, costing 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, just dial ☎ 1800-REVERSE (738 3773), or ☎ 12 550.

Toll-free numbers (prefix ☎ 1800) can be called free of charge from anywhere in the country, though 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 ☎ 1800, ☎ 13 or ☎ 1300 cannot be dialled from outside Australia.

International Calls

Most pay phones allow ISD (International Subscriber Dialling) calls, the cost and international dialling code of which will vary depending on which provider you're using. International calls from Australia are very cheap and subject to specials that reduce the rates even more, so it's worth shopping around – look in the *Yellow Pages* telephone book (or on www.yellowpages.com.au) 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 need to dial the international access code from Australia (☎ 0011 or ☎ 0018), the country code and the area code (without the initial 0). So for a London number you'd dial ☎ 0011-44-20, then the number. Also, certain operators will have you dial a special code to access their service.

Following is a list of some country codes:

Country	International country code
France	☎ 33
Germany	☎ 49
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 (zero) in the state/territory area codes; from the '02' for NSW and ACT, for example. Similarly, if dialling an Australian mobile phone from overseas dial ☎ 61 and drop the initial 0 of the mobile number.

Local Calls

Calls from private phones cost 15c to 25c; local calls from public phones cost 50c – both with unlimited talk time. Calls to mobile phones cost more and are timed.

Long-Distance Calls & Area Codes

For long-distance calls, Australia uses four STD (Subscriber Trunk Dialling) area codes. STD calls can be made from virtually any public phone and are cheaper during off-peak hours, which are roughly between 7pm and 7am weeknights, and from 7pm Friday to 7am Monday. 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

In some border areas, NSW uses 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. Sydney, Canberra and the coast get good reception, but elsewhere (apart from major towns) it's haphazard or nonexistent. In northwest, central west and far west NSW CDMA is the most common network.

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, though, as the main service providers (such as Telstra, Optus, Vodafone, Virgin and 3) all have prepaid mobile systems.

Phonecards

A wide range of phonecards is available from newsagents and post offices for a fixed dollar value (usually \$10, \$20, \$30 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. Once again it's well worth shopping around, as call rates vary from company to company. Some public phones also accept credit cards.

TIME

Australia is divided into three time zones. NSW and the ACT are on Eastern Standard Time (GMT/UTC plus 10 hours). There are minor exceptions – for instance, Broken Hill is on Central time (GMT/UTC plus 9½ hours). When it's noon in Sydney, the time in London is 3am (April to October) or 1am (November to March).

For more on international timing, see www.timeanddate.com/worldclock.

Daylight saving – for which clocks are put forward an hour – operates in NSW during the warmer months (October to March).

TOILETS

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

TOURIST INFORMATION

Australia's and NSW's highly self-conscious tourism infrastructure means that when looking for information you can easily end up being buried neck-deep in brochures, booklets, maps and leaflets, or 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.

Tourism New South Wales (☎ 02-9931 1111; www.visitnsw.com.au) is the state's tourism body and offers no end of information, touring ideas and contacts.

Local Tourist Offices

Almost every town in NSW seems to maintain a tourist office of some type and in many cases they are very good, with friendly staff (often volunteers) providing local information. If you're going to book 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.

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Disability awareness in Australia is pretty high and getting higher. Legislation requires that new accommodation meet accessibility standards, and discrimination by tourism operators is illegal. Many of Australia's key attractions provide access for those with limited mobility, and a number of sites have also begun addressing the needs of visitors with visual or aural impairments; contact attractions in advance to confirm the facilities available. Tour operators with wheelchair-accessible vehicles operate from most capital cities.

VISAS

All visitors to Australia need a visa – only New Zealand nationals are exempt, and even they receive a 'special category' visa on arrival. Visa application forms are available from Australian diplomatic missions overseas, travel agents or the website of the **Department of Immigration & Multicultural Affairs** (☎ 13 18 81; www.immi.gov.au). There are several types of visas, as follows.

Electronic Travel Authority (ETA)

Many visitors can get an ETA, valid for three months of travel in Australia, through any

overseas airline or travel agent registered with the International Air Transport Association (IATA). They make the application directly 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 some 33 countries, including the UK, USA and Canada, most European countries, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan and Korea.

You can also make an online ETA application at www.eta.immi.gov.au, where no fees apply.

Tourist Visas

Short-term tourist visas have largely been replaced by the Electronic Travel Authority (ETA, see left). 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 \$75) allow one (in some cases multiple) entry and stays of up to three months, and are valid for use within 12 months of issue.

Visa Extensions

Visitors are allowed a maximum stay of 12 months, including extensions. Visa extensions are made through the Department of Immigration & Multicultural & Indigenous Affairs and it's best to apply at least two or three weeks before your visa expires. The application fee is \$205 – it's nonrefundable, even if your application is rejected.

Working Holiday-Maker (WHM) Visas

Visitors between the ages of 18 and 30 from Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK among others are eligible for a WHM visa, which allows you to visit for up to 12 months and gain casual employment.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

NSW 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

NSW FOR TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Information

Reliable information is the key ingredient for travellers with disabilities and the best source is the **National Information Communication & Awareness Network** (Nican; ☎ /TTY 1800 806 769, 02-6241 1220; www.nican.com.au; Unit 5, 48 Brookes St, Mitchell, ACT 2911). 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 the **Australian Tourist Commission** (www.australia.com) publishes detailed, downloadable information for people with disabilities, including travel and transport tips and contact addresses of organisations in each state.

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

A comprehensive website covering public toilets nationwide lists every one that has disability access. For more information, visit www.toiletmap.gov.au.

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

The **Paraplegic & Quadriplegic Association of NSW** (☎ 02-8741 5600; www.paraquad.org.au) provides some information about accommodation and care.

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 earlier in this box) 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.

Car Hire

Avis and Hertz offer hire cars with hand controls at no extra charge for pick-up at capital cities and the major airports, but advance notice is required.

The international wheelchair symbol (blue on a white background) for parking in allocated bays is recognised.

Taxi

Most taxi companies in major cities and towns have modified vehicles that will take wheelchairs.

Train

In NSW, **CountryLink** (☎ 13 22 32; www.countrylink.info) has XPT trains that have at least one carriage (usually the buffet car) with a seat removed for a wheelchair, and an accessible toilet. In Sydney some, but not all, rail stations are accessible. **CityRail** (☎ 13 15 00; www.cityrail.info) has details.

applies to outback and rural towns where there are often a lot of unlit, semideserted 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 urban male or a rural bloke living a less-than-enlightened pro-forma bush existence. Stereotypically, the further you get from 'civilisation' (ie the

SEASONAL WORK

Working holiday-makers will find an abundance of hospitality, temporary and other short-term work in Sydney. The NSW ski fields are also good prospects for seasonal work, particularly around Thredbo (p298), although you'll need to apply early as jobs are extremely popular. There is plenty of cotton work in Narrabri (p253) and Moree (p254), and grape picking in the Hunter Valley (p149). Fruit picking is all the go near Tenterfield (p224), around Braidwood (p304), Batlow (p310) and Tumbarumba (p310).

Employment websites:

Career One (www.careerone.com)

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

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

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

Seek (www.seek.com)

big cities), the less enlightened your average Aussie male is probably going to be about women's issues. Having said that, many women 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 and not hitching at all is common sense.

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is extremely popular in Australia with locals as well as travellers and can be the most rewarding feature of your trip. Opportunities range from writing research papers for your favourite social cause to plant-

ing trees. It's even possible to base your trip around a volunteer project – organisations like the **Earthwatch Institute** (www.earthwatch.org) offer volunteer 'expeditions' that focus on conservation and wildlife. **Conservation Volunteers Australia** (☎ 1800 032 501; www.conservationvolunteers.com.au) has a nature holiday section, including programs on the south coast. **STA** (www.statravel.co.uk) is another great resource for international travellers seeking volunteer holiday opportunities in Australia.

Good volunteering websites:

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.

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

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

Transport

CONTENTS

Getting There & Away	383
Entering the Country	383
Air	383
Land	386
Sea	386
Getting Around	386
Air	386
Bicycle	387
Boat	388
Bus	388
Car & Motorcycle	389
Hitching	395
Local Transport	395
Train	396

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 usually means a long-haul flight. That 'over the horizon' feeling doesn't stop once you're here either – even in just one state like New South Wales (NSW), the distances between key towns can be vast, requiring a minimum of a day or two of highway cruising or dirt-road jostling to traverse.

Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Entering Australia is a straightforward process and you shouldn't encounter any problems as long as you have a valid visa (p380). There are no restrictions when it comes to citizens of foreign countries entering Australia.

AIR

There are many 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 the year can prove busy for inbound tourists – if you plan to fly at a particularly popular period (Christmas is a notoriously difficult time to get into Sydney) or on a particularly popular route (such as Hong Kong, Bangkok or Singapore to Sydney), make your arrangements well ahead.

Disembarking in Australia is generally a straightforward affair, with only the usual customs declarations and the fight to be first to the luggage carousel to endure.

Recent global instability, thanks (or rather, no thanks) to terrorism and war-fever, has meant conspicuously increased security in Australian airports, both in domestic and international terminals, and you may find customs procedures now more time consuming. This is especially true in Sydney, where the immigration lines can seem endless.

For more information on customs and quarantine, see p370.

Airports & Airlines

Australia has a number of international gateways, with Sydney being the busiest. Sydney's **Kingsford Smith Airport** (code SYD; ☎ 02-9667 9111; www.sydneyairport.com.au) is 10km south of the city centre, in Mascot.

Australia's overseas carrier is Qantas. Viewed as one of the world's safest airlines, it flies chiefly to Europe, North America, Asia and the Pacific. A low-fare subsidiary of Qantas, Jetstar, has a growing list of nonstop flights to international destinations.

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 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.

Airlines that visit Sydney include the following. (Note, all phone numbers mentioned here are for dialling from within Sydney.)

Air Canada (airline code AC; ☎ 1300 655 757, 02-8248 5757; www.aircanada.ca)

Air New Zealand (airline code NZ; ☎ 13 24 76, 02-8235 9999; www.airnz.com.au)

British Airways (airline code BA; ☎ 1300 767 177; www.britishairways.com.au)

Cathay Pacific (airline code CX; ☎ 13 17 47, 02-9667 3816; www.cathaypacific.com.au)

Emirates (airline code EK; ☎ 1300 303 777, 02-9290 9776; www.emirates.com)

Garuda Indonesia (airline code GA; ☎ 1300 365 330; www.garuda-indonesia.com)

Gulf Air (airline code GF; ☎ 1300 366 337; www.gulfairco.com)

Japan Airlines (airline code JL; ☎ 02-9272 1111; www.jal.com)

KLM (airline code KL; ☎ 1300 392 192; www.klm.com)

Lufthansa (airline code LH; ☎ 1300 655 727; www.luft-hansa-australia.com)

Malaysia Airlines (airline code MH; ☎ 13 26 27, 02-9364 3500; www.malaysiaairlines.com.au)

Pacific Blue (airline code DJ; ☎ 13 16 45; www.flypacificblue.com)

Qantas (airline code QF; ☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au)

Singapore Airlines (airline code SQ; ☎ 13 10 11, 02-9350 0100; www.singaporeair.com.au)

South African Airways (airline code SA; ☎ 02-9286 8960; www3.flysaa.com)

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

United Airlines (airline code UA; ☎ 13 17 77; www.unitedairlines.com.au)

Virgin Atlantic (airline code VS; ☎ 1300 727 340; www.virgin-atlantic.com)

Tickets

The internet is a vital resource for checking airline prices and many offer great deals on both economy and business-class 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 for advice and the low-down on avoiding stopovers.

For online bookings, try the following:

Cheap Flights (www.cheapflights.com, www.cheapflights.co.uk) Informative site with specials, airline information and flight searches covering the USA and UK.

Expedia (www.expedia.msn.com)

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

Opodo (www.opodo.com) Excellent pan-European travel site offering fares from European countries.

Roundtheworld.com (www.roundtheworldflights.com) Allows you to build your own RTW trips with up to six stops.

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motor transport generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travellers to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: lonelyplanet.com.

ECONOMY-CLASS SYNDROME

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a relatively rare but potentially serious condition that may develop when flying. DVT is the formation of a blood clot, usually in the legs, caused by sitting in cramped conditions for an extended period. It can be fatal if the clot moves to the heart or lungs.

The term 'Economy-Class Syndrome' is a bit of a misnomer since it can happen in any class, and indeed any situation. Awareness of the link between DVT and flying economy class heightened a few years ago when an Australian passenger died at Heathrow airport after a long-haul flight. Many passengers have since come forward to say they experienced blood clotting during or after flying.

You can't really avoid the flight to Australia, but you can get up and walk around during the flight, factor in stopovers rather than taking a direct flight, and see your doctor prior to flying if you feel you may be at risk. The elderly and overweight are most at risk of DVT complications.

STA (www.statravel.com) Linked to worldwide STA sites.

Travel.com (www.travel.com) Fares from the US.

Travelocity (www.travelocity.com) Good US site.

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

Zuji (www.zuji.com) Excellent site for fares from the Asia Pacific region.

From Asia

Most Asian countries offer fairly competitive air-fare deals, with Bangkok, Singapore and Hong Kong being 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 sometimes full. The moral of the story is to plan your preferred itinerary well in advance.

Some local agents:

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

STA Travel Bangkok (☎ 02-236 0262; www.statravel.co.th); Singapore (☎ 65-6737 7188; www.statravel.com.sg); Tokyo (☎ 03-5391 2922; www.statravel.co.jp)

From 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.

Canadian discount air-ticket sellers are known as consolidators (although you won't see a sign on the door saying 'Consolidator') and their air fares tend to be a little higher than those sold in the USA.

Useful agencies:

Pacesetter Travel (☎ 1800 387 8827; www.pacesettertravel.com)

Travel Cuts (☎ 1800 246 8762; www.travelcuts.com) Canada's national student travel agency.

From Continental Europe

From the major destinations in Europe, most flights travel 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.

Useful agencies:

Adventure Travel (www.adventure-holidays.com) German agency specialising in Australian travel.

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

Holland International (www.hollandinternational.nl) Good Dutch agency.

OTU Voyages (☎ 01 55 82 32 32; www.otu.fr) French network of student travel agencies; supplies discount tickets to travellers of all ages.

Nouvelles Frontières (☎ 0825 000 747; www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr)

Usit Connect Voyages (☎ 0825 082 525; www.usitconnections.fr) French Student/youth specialists.

Voyagers du Monde (www.vdm.com)

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

From New Zealand

Air New Zealand and Qantas operate a network of flights linking Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch in New Zealand with Sydney. Also look for foreign carriers like Emirates, which offers some reasonable fares.

Other trans-Tasman options:

Air New Zealand (☎ 0800 737 000; www.airnewzealand.co.nz)

Go Holidays (www.goholidays.co.nz) Specialists for Australian travel.

House of Travel (www.houseoftravel.co.nz) Nation-wide travel agency.

Travel Online (☎ 0800 000 747; www.travelonline.co.nz)

Freedom Air (☎ 0800 600 500; www.freedomair.com)

An Air New Zealand subsidiary that operates direct flights and offers excellent rates year-round.

From the 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. Unless there are special deals on offer, British Airways, Singapore Airlines and Qantas generally have higher fares but may offer a more direct route.

Airline ticket discounters are known as bucket shops in the UK, and many advertise in the travel pages of the free magazine *TNT*.

Austravel (☎ 0870 166 2020; www.austravel.net)

Bridge the World (☎ 0870 444 7474)

Ebookers (☎ 0870 814 0000; www.ebookers.com)

Oz Flights (☎ 0870 747 11 747; www.ozflights.co.uk)

Trailfinders (☎ 0845 058 5858; www.trailfinders.co.uk)

Travel Bag (☎ 0870 814 4441; www.travelbag.co.uk)

From the USA

Airlines directly connecting Australia non-stop across the Pacific with Los Angeles or San Francisco include Qantas, Air New Zealand and United Airlines. There are also numerous airlines offering flights via Asia, with stopover possibilities including Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Hong Kong and Singapore; and via the Pacific with stopover possibilities like Nadi (Fiji), Rarotonga (Cook Islands), Tahiti (French Polynesia) and Auckland (NZ).

As in Canada, discount travel agents in the USA are known as consolidators. San Francisco is the ticket-consolidator capital of America.

Useful agencies:

Air Brokers International (☎ 1800 883 3273; www.airbrokers.com) Good for RTW fares including Australian stops.

Airtreks (☎ 1877 247 8735; www.airtreks.com)

STA Travel (☎ 1800 781 4040; www.statravel.com)

LAND

See the Getting Around section for bus (p388) and train (p396) services between NSW and other parts of Australia.

Border Crossings

There are three main road routes to/from NSW and the rest of Australia.

East Coast North The Pacific Hwy follows the East Coast north into Queensland and on to Brisbane.

East Coast South The Princes Hwy (Hwy 1) follows the East Coast south into Victoria and on to Melbourne.

Inland The Hume Fwy/Hwy (Hwy 31) is the shortest route to Melbourne from Sydney and links with Wagga Wagga and Canberra.

There are numerous other options, including remote tracks right across the outback.

See the Getting Around section (below) for road rules and other considerations such as quarantine rules for driving to NSW.

SEA

International cruise lines are increasingly serving Sydney. **Princess Cruises** (www.princess.com) operates routes around Australia and New Zealand. However these voyages are mainly geared for travellers starting and ending their trips in the same city, such as Sydney. You'll have to look around for options that let you go one way.

Another option is travel by freighter. These huge container ships circumnavigate the globe and it is possible to book trips from both the US and UK to Sydney. However, note that ports of call may be remote container ports lacking in charm, and life aboard ship will be the exact opposite of the boozy excesses promised by cruise lines.

For details, try www.freighterworld.com and www.strandtravel.co.uk.

GETTING AROUND

AIR

Australia is so vast that flying is common between the far-flung cities. The industry is safe and increased competition over the last 10 years has seen fares plummet. Within NSW there are numerous routes you can take to cut your travel time. All domestic flights are nonsmoking.

Airlines in Australia

Qantas, Virgin Blue and Jetstar are the main competitors in the domestic market. In general they stick to the larger hubs, but small towns in NSW are also served by subsidiaries and affiliates, particularly QantasLink and Regional Express.

Regional airlines:

Brindabella Airlines (☎ 1300 668 824; www.brindabellaairlines.com.au)

Jetstar (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com.au) The budget wing of Qantas.

Qantas (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au)

QantasLink (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au)

Regional Express (Rex; ☎ 13 17 13; www.regionalexpress.com.au) Flies to rural destinations in NSW.

Virgin Blue (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au) Highly competitive.

Air Passes

With discounting being the norm these days, air passes are not great value, but international travellers on a tight itinerary might benefit from a Qantas **Boomerang Pass**, which involves buying at least two sectors (priced from \$160 to \$360 depending on the distance) in conjunction with your international ticket. Qantas also offers an **Aussie AirPass** (US\$999 from Los Angeles or CA\$1399 from Vancouver) which includes your round trip from Los Angeles or Vancouver plus three flights within Australia.

Regional Express has a **Rex Backpacker** scheme, where international visitors pay \$500/\$950 for one month/two months of unlimited travel on the airline – standby fares only. You'd need to fit in four or five flights in a month in NSW to make this worthwhile.

BICYCLE

Australia has much to offer cyclists, from leisurely bike paths winding through most major cities (Canberra has one of the most extensive networks) 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.

Bicycle helmets are compulsory in NSW, as are white front lights and red rear lights for riding at night.

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

Much of NSW 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 the highways and the 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 becoming dehydrated. 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.

Outback travel needs to be properly planned, with the availability of drinking water the main concern – those isolated water sources (bores, tanks, creeks and the like) shown on your map may be dry or the water may be 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.

For suggestions on where to cycle in NSW see the Directory (p369) and New South Wales Outdoors (p42).

Hire

The rates charged by most outfits for renting road or mountain bikes (not including the discounted fees offered by budget accommodation places to their guests) are anywhere between \$8 to \$12 per hour and \$20 to \$50 per day. Security deposits can range from \$50 to \$200, depending on the rental period.

Purchase

If you want to tour NSW by bike then renting isn't an option – you'll need to buy a set of wheels. For a new road cycle or mountain bike that won't leave a trail of worn-out or busted metal parts once it leaves the city limits, your starting point (and we mean your absolute

bottom-level starting point) is \$400 to \$500. 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. Second-hand bikes are worth checking out in the cities, as are the post-Christmas sales and mid-year stocktakes, which is when newish bicycles can be heavily discounted.

Your best bet for re-selling your bike is the **Trading Post** (☎ 1300 138 016; www.tradingpost.com.au), which is distributed in newspaper form in urban centres around Australia, and which also has a busy online trading site. Also check the classifieds section at the website of **Bicycling Australia** (www.bicyclingaustralia.com).

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.

BUS

New South Wales has an extensive, reliable and relatively cheap bus network. Bear in mind that distances can be vast, and if you're covering a lot of ground in one go (eg Sydney to Byron Bay), you may be better off booking a cheap flight. 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.

The two main companies servicing the New South Wales coast are **Greyhound** (☎ 13 14 99; www.greyhound.com.au) and **Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10; www.premiers.com.au). Fares and stops for both companies are interchangeable, although Greyhound is often ever so slightly more expensive. Greyhound fares can be purchased online and are roughly 5% cheaper than over-the-counter tickets.

CountryLink (☎ 13 22 32; www.countrylink.info) replaced many of its trains with buses after closing numerous train lines in recent years.

Smaller regional operators running key routes or covering a lot of ground are listed as follows:

Fearnese Coaches (☎ 1800 029 918; www.fearnese.com.au) Runs between Sydney, Canberra and Wagga Wagga.
Firefly Express (☎ 1800 631 164; www.fireflyexpress.com.au) Runs between Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.
Murrays Coaches (☎ 13 22 51; www.murrays.com.au) Runs between Sydney and Canberra.

Port Stephens Coaches (☎ 02-4982 2940; www.pscoaches.com.au) Runs between Sydney and Port Stephens and Newcastle.

Transborder (☎ 02-6241 0033; www.transborder.com.au)

Bus Passes

Greyhound offers a profusion of bus passes around Australia, but the following are useful for travel in NSW. There's a 10% discount for members of YHA/HI, VIP, Nomads and Roam Free.

The **Explorer Pass** gives you from one to 12 months to cover a set route – there are 24 in all and the validity period depends on distance. You can't backtrack but if you can find a route that suits you it generally works out cheaper than booking individual sections. The Explorer Central Coaster Pass covers the east coast north of Sydney to Brisbane and costs \$175.

The easiest and simplest pass is the **Aussie Kilometre Pass**, which gives you a specified amount of travel, starting at 2000km (\$340) and going up in increments of 1000km to a maximum of 20,000km (\$2450). The pass is valid for 12 months and you can travel where and in what direction you like, and stop as many times as you like.

Premier Motor Services also offer a Sydney to Brisbane pass with either one stop (\$90) or unlimited stops (\$130).

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 regularly available.

Autopia Tours (☎ 1800 000 507, 03-9419 8878; www.autopiatours.com.au) has a four-day Melbourne to Sydney tour via the Snowy Mountains, Canberra and the Blue Mountains, including breakfast, lunch and accommodation (\$400).

Oz Experience (☎ 1300 300 028; www.ozexperience.com) is a hop-on hop-off service you'll either

ROAD DISTANCES (KM)

Albury	---																				
Bega	485	---																			
Bourke	829	966	---																		
Broken Hill	841	1230	616	---																	
Canberra	344	222	744	1089	---																
Dubbo	521	616	369	753	394	---															
Grafton	1199	1044	817	1334	932	649	---														
Mildura	545	934	887	296	793	838	1488	---													
Moree	897	992	450	1066	770	376	366	1214	---												
Newcastle	719	565	734	1118	453	365	480	1168	484	---											
Port Macquarie	972	817	871	1302	705	627	234	1412	551	253	---										
Sydney	556	402	777	1161	290	408	634	1005	616	163	407	---									
Tamworth	865	816	588	1029	704	344	305	1182	268	282	273	414	---								
	Albury	Bega	Bourke	Broken Hill	Canberra	Dubbo	Grafton	Mildura	Moree	Newcastle	Port Macquarie	Sydney	Tamworth								

love or hate. Many travellers complain they can't get a seat on the bus of their choice and are left on stand-by lists for days, or summarise it as a party bus for younger travellers, while others rave about it as a highly social experience. The country's biggest backpacker bus network, it covers central and eastern Australia. Travel is one-directional and passes are valid for six months with unlimited stops. Passes include some accommodation, meals and activities; a Sydney–Darwin pass via Melbourne, Adelaide and Alice Springs is \$1895; Sydney–Cairns is \$795; Sydney–Brisbane is \$380.

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, non-discounted, one-way bus fares on some well-travelled routes through NSW.

Destination	Adult/child/concession
Sydney-Brisbane	\$111/91/103
Sydney-Canberra	\$36/26/26
Sydney-Melbourne	\$71/58/65

Reservations

Over summer, school holidays and public holidays, you should book well ahead on the more popular routes, including intercity and east-coast services. At other times you should have few problems getting on to your preferred service. But if your long-term travel plans rely on catching a particular bus, book at least a day or two ahead just to be safe.

You should make a reservation at least one day in advance if you are planning to use a Greyhound pass.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

NSW ranges from the built-up east coast to the sparsely populated interior where public transport is often neither comprehensive nor convenient, and sometimes nonexistent. Many travellers find that the best way to see the place is to buy 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.

The **Roads & Traffic Authority (RTA)**; ☎ 13 22 13; www.rta.nsw.gov.au is NSW's government body in charge of roads. It provides a wealth of information on road rules and conditions. It has a downloadable brochure in several languages that summarises Australian road rules for foreigners.

Automobile Associations

In NSW and ACT, the **National Roads & Motorists Association (NRMA)**; ☎ 13 11 22; www.nrma.com.au provides emergency services when breakdowns occur, literature, excellent touring maps and detailed guides to accommodation and camping grounds.

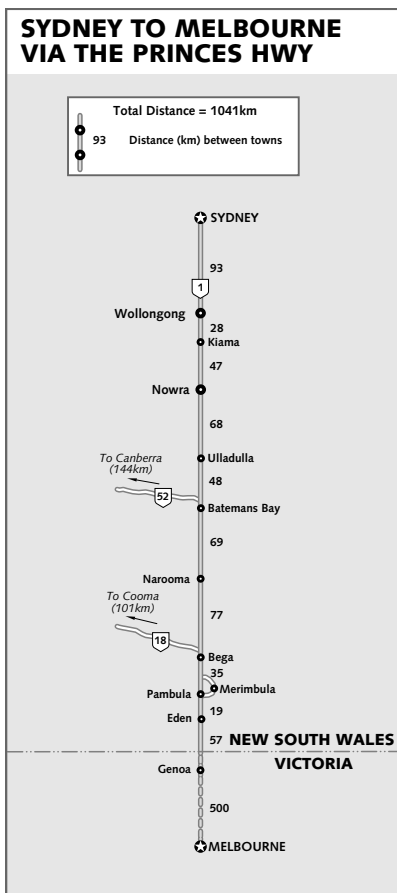
NRMA has reciprocal arrangements with other states in Australia and with similar organisations overseas. So if you're a member of the AAA in the USA, or the RAC or AA in the UK, you can use any of the NRMA's facilities. Bring proof of membership.

Bringing Your Own Vehicle

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. The long, open roads are really made for large-capacity machines above 750cc, which Australians prefer once they outgrow their 250cc learner restrictions.

Driving Licence

You can use your own home-country's driving licence in NSW, as long as it's in English and has your photograph for identification. If it's not in English then a) we're very impressed that you're reading this and b) you need an English translation or an **International Driving Permit (IDP)**, which must be supported by your home licence. It's easy enough to get an IDP – just go to your home country's automo-



bile association and they issue it on the spot. The permits are valid for 12 months.

Fuel & Spare Parts

Fuel (super, diesel and unleaded) is available from service stations sporting the well-known international brand names. LPG (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 and from price war to price war, but basically fuel is heavily taxed and prices continue to climb. At the time of writing, unleaded petrol hovered around \$1.45 per litre. Once you get out into the country, prices soar as high as \$1.60. Note that in rural NSW petrol stations may be 150km or more apart.

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. See also Road Conditions (p393).

Hire

Competition between car-rental companies in Australia is pretty fierce, so rates tend to be variable and lots of special deals come and go. The main thing to remember when assessing your options is distance – if you want to travel far, you need unlimited kilometres.

As well as the big firms, there are a vast number of local firms, or firms with outlets in a limited number of locations. These are almost always cheaper than the big operators – sometimes half the price – but cheap car hire can often come with serious restrictions.

The major companies offer a choice: either unlimited kilometres, or 100km or so a day free, plus so many cents per kilometre over this. Daily rates in cities or on the east coast are typically about \$60 to \$65 a day for a small car, about \$70 to \$80 a day for a medium car, or \$90 to \$120 a day for a big car. Insurance is extra, and can often be more than the cost of the rental itself. You must be at least 21 years old to hire from most firms – if you're under 25 you may only be able to hire a small car or have to pay a surcharge. It's much cheaper if you rent for a week or more and there are often low-season and weekend discounts. Credit cards are the usual payment method.

Major companies all have offices or agents in Sydney and some smaller towns.

Avis (☎ 13 63 33; www.avis.com.au)

Budget (☎ 13 27 27; www.budget.com.au)

Europcar (☎ 1300 131 390; www.europcar.com.au)

Hertz (☎ 13 30 39; www.hertz.com.au)

Thrifty (☎ 1300 367 227; www.thrifty.com.au)

4WD & CAMPERVAN HIRE

Renting a 4WD enables you to get right off the beaten track and out to some of the natural wonders that most travellers miss. Something small like a Suzuki Vitara or Toyota Rav4 costs around \$100 per day. For a Toyota Landcruiser you'll spend at least \$160, which should include some free kilometres (typically 100km to 200km per day, sometimes unlimited).

Check insurance conditions carefully, especially the excess amount, as it can be onerous – \$5000 is common, although this can be

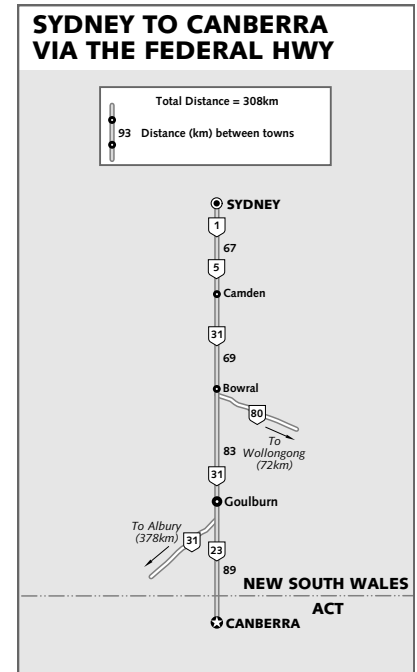
reduced to around \$1000 (or even to nil) on payment of an additional daily charge (around \$50). Even for a 4WD, the insurance offered by most companies does not cover damage caused when travelling 'off-road', which basically means anything that is not a maintained bitumen or dirt road. Hertz, Budget and Avis have 4WD rentals.

Britz Rentals (☎ 1800 331 454, 02-9667 0402; www.britz.com) hires fully equipped 4WDs fitted out as campervans. The high-season costs start from around \$165 (two-berth) or \$210 (four-berth) per day for a minimum hire of five days (with unlimited kilometres), but the price climbs from there; to reduce the insurance excess from \$5000 to zero costs an extra \$50 per day.

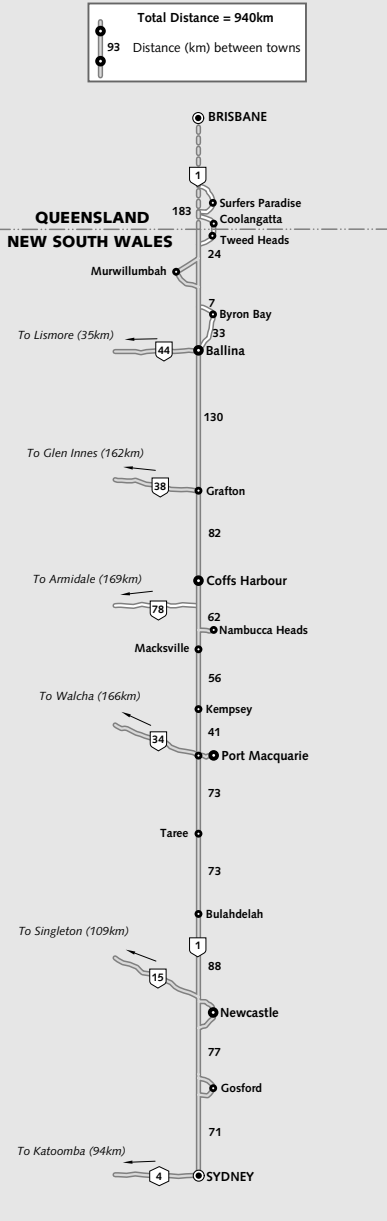
Wicked Campers (☎ 1800 246 869; www.wickedcampers.com.au) has an office in Sydney (see p105) and rents out spectacularly painted vehicles with a spot to sleep in the back.

Insurance

In Australia, third-party personal injury insurance is always included in the vehicle registration cost, ensuring that every registered vehicle carries at least the minimum



SYDNEY TO BRISBANE VIA THE PACIFIC HWY



insurance. You'd be wise to extend that minimum to at least third-party property insurance as well – minor collisions with other vehicles can be amazingly expensive.

When it comes to hire cars, know exactly what your liability is in the event of an accident. Rather than risk paying out thousands of dollars if you do have an accident, you can take out your own comprehensive insurance on the car, or (the usual option) pay an additional daily amount to the rental company for an 'insurance excess reduction' policy. This brings the amount of excess you must pay in the event of an accident down from between \$2000 and \$5000 to nil.

Be aware that if you travel off bitumen/dirt roads onto bush tracks you will not be covered by insurance even if you have a 4WD – in other words, if you have an accident you'll be liable for all the costs involved. Also, most companies' insurance won't cover the cost of damage to glass (including the windscreen) or tyres. Always read the small print.

Outback Travel

In western NSW there are plenty of roads and trails that bring new meaning to the phrase 'off the beaten track'.

While you may not need 4WD or fancy expedition equipment to tackle most of these roads, you do need to be carefully prepared for the loneliness 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, you need to carry a high-frequency (HF) radio transceiver, equipped to pick up the relevant Royal Flying Doctor Service bases, and a CB radio. 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. Mobile phones only work in a couple of large outback towns so are basically useless.

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.

It's wise not to 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 easily lead to tragedy at this time. Conversely, you can't go anywhere on dirt roads in the outback if it's been raining. The roads are closed and fines for using them are hefty (see also p264). Get local advice before heading off into the middle of nowhere. For more information regarding NSW's climate see p370.

If you do run into trouble in the back of beyond, don't wander off – stay with your car. From the air, it's easier to spot a car than a human being, and you wouldn't be able to carry a heavy load of water very far anyway. Police suggest that 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.

Of course, before you set out, let family, friends or your car-hire company know where you're going and when you intend to be back.

Purchase

When it comes to buying or selling a car, every state has its own regulations, particularly in regard to registration (rego). In NSW safety checks are compulsory every year when you renew the registration. Stamp duty has to be paid when you buy a car and, as this is based on the purchase price, it's not unknown for buyer and seller to agree privately to understate the price.

Note that it's much easier to sell a car in the same state that it's registered in, otherwise you (or the buyer) must re-register it in the new state, and that's a hassle.

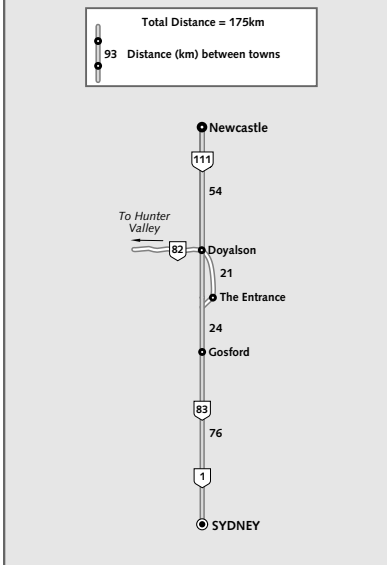
The best place to buy a car is Sydney – see p105 for more information.

BUY-BACK DEALS

One way of getting around the hassles of buying and selling a vehicle privately is to enter into a buy-back arrangement with a car or motorcycle dealer. However, dealers may find ways of knocking down the price when you return the vehicle (even if the price was agreed to in writing), often by pointing out expensive repairs that allegedly will be required to gain the dreaded roadworthiness certificate needed to transfer the registration.

A company that specialises in buy-back arrangements on cars and campervans is **Travellers Auto Barn** (☎ 1800 674 374; www.travellers-autobarn.com.au), which has offices in Sydney and offers a range of vehicles.

SYDNEY TO NEWCASTLE VIA THE PACIFIC HWY & COAST ROAD



Buy-back arrangements are also possible with large motorcycle dealers in major cities. They're usually keen to do business, and basic negotiating skills allied with a wad of cash (say, \$8000) should secure an excellent second-hand road bike with a written guarantee that they'll buy it back, if it's in good condition, minus around \$2000. **Better Bikes** (☎ 02-9718 6668; www.betterbikes.com.au; 605 Canterbury Rd, Belmore) is a Sydney dealer that offers buy-back deals.

Road Conditions

NSW has few multilane highways. There are stretches of divided road (four or six lanes) in some particularly busy areas of Sydney although even here you will find yourself on coagulated local streets more often than you would like. Elsewhere the major roads are sealed two-or three-lanes.

You don't have to get far off the beaten track to find dirt roads. In fact, anybody who sets out to see the country in reasonable detail should expect some dirt-road travelling. And if you seriously want to explore more remote parts, you'd better plan on having a

SYDNEY TO DUBBO VIA THE WESTERN HWY, GREAT WESTERN HWY & MITCHELL HWY

Total Distance = 420km
93 Distance (km) between towns



4WD and a winch. A few basic spare parts, such as fan belts and radiator hoses, are worth carrying if you're travelling to 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. 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.

The RTA (p390) can provide up-to-date road condition information.

Road Hazards

The roadkill that you unfortunately see a lot of in the outback is mostly from cars and trucks hitting animals during the night. 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.

A not-so-obvious 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.

Road Rules

Driving in NSW holds few real surprises, other than the odd animal caught in your headlights. Australians drive on the left-hand side of the road and all cars are right-hand drive. An important road rule is 'give way

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 windshield. When trying to overtake one, make sure you have plenty of room to complete the manoeuvre (allow about a kilometre). 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 has gone past.

And while you're on outback roads, don't forget 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.

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, although this has been reduced to 50km/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. 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. Whatever, 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 yours – 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 over 0.05% be prepared for a big fine and the loss of your licence.

The RTA (p390) provides a downloadable brochure in several languages that summarises Australian road rules for foreigners.

PARKING

One of the big problems with driving around Sydney (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 rorts in Australia that by 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 Sydney there are large multistorey car parks where you can park all day for between \$15 and \$30.

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 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, but a downward-pointed finger is more widely understood.

LOCAL TRANSPORT Bus & Train

Sydney has a good public transport network. The **Transport Infoline** (☎ 13 15 00; www.131500.com.au) provides schedule and service information. In Canberra, Wollongong and Newcastle, it's also possible to get around by public transport. Anywhere else, it becomes a bit problematic. There are buses in cities such as Wagga Wagga, Nowra and Dubbo, but they're fairly infrequent.

INTERSTATE QUARANTINE

When travelling in Australia, whether by land or air, you'll come across signs (mainly in airports, interstate train stations and at state borders) warning of the possible dangers of carrying fruit, plants and vegetables (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 their spread.

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

Taxi

Sydney has a lot of taxis, but you won't see many plying for trade on the streets of country towns. That doesn't mean they aren't there – even small towns often have at least one taxi and you can find the number in a local phone book or at the tourist office.

Taxi fares vary through the state, but shouldn't differ much from Sydney. In most towns you should be able to call a taxi service by dialling ☎ 13 10 08.

TRAIN

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 between Sydney and Perth is one of Australia's great rail journeys. For details on this journey contact **Great Southern Railways** (☎ 13 21 47; www.gsr.com.au).

Rail services in NSW are run by the government's **CountryLink** (☎ 13 22 32; www.countrylink.info) which serves a variety of destinations with trains and connecting buses. Some services include destinations in Victoria and Queensland. Fairly fast trains known as XPTs serve Canberra (four hours), Wagga Wagga (six hours), Melbourne (10 hours) and Brisbane (14 hours).

Many other routes are served such as those to Byron Bay (13 hours), Broken Hill (13 hours) and Moree (seven hours) but these trains can run quite slowly, and often only once a day or less.

CountryLink trains are air-conditioned and comfortable. There are usually two classes of service – first and economy – with the

former offering more room and nicer seats. Food and drink are available for purchase. There are Sydney to Brisbane and Melbourne night trains, which include sleepers with twin compartments.

CityRail (☎ 13 15 00; www.cityrail.info), the Sydney metropolitan service, runs frequent commuter-style trains south through Wollongong to Bomaderry; west through the Blue Mountains to Katoomba and Lithgow; north to Newcastle; and southwest through the Southern Highlands to Goulburn. Some services duplicate the near-Sydney portions of CountryLink services, but they're slower and much cheaper, especially if you buy a day-return ticket. Off-peak return fares are available after 9am on weekdays and all day on weekends.

Costs

Children can travel for reduced fares; advance purchase fares will save you 30% to 50%. First class costs about 40% more than economy.

Some standard one-way adult economy fares on CountryLink trains:

Destination	Fare
Sydney-Brisbane	\$100
Sydney-Broken Hill	\$110
Sydney-Canberra	\$55
Sydney-Melbourne	\$100
Sydney-Moree	\$80
Sydney-Wagga Wagga	\$70

Reservations

As the CountryLink booking system is computerised, most stations can make a booking for most journeys. For reservations telephone ☎ 13 22 32 during office hours; this will connect you to the nearest main-line station.

You can't book seats on CityRail trains.

Train Passes

The **Great Southern Railways Pass** (☎ 13 21 47), which is only available to passport-equipped non-Australian residents, allows unlimited travel on the national rail network for a period of six months. The pass costs a meagre \$690/590 per adult/concession (meagre when you consider 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 pre-book all seats at least 24 hours in advance.

CountryLink offers several travel passes. The **East Coast Discovery Pass** allows one-way economy travel from Melbourne through NSW and Sydney and on to Brisbane and Cairns

(in either direction) with unlimited stopovers, and is valid for six months – the full trip costs \$470, while segments from Sydney to Brisbane and Sydney to Melbourne cost \$110. Available to overseas visitors with valid passports only is the **Backtracker Rail Pass**, which allows travel on the entire CountryLink network and comes in four versions: a 14-day/1-/3-/6-month pass costing \$235/275/300/420 respectively.

CityRail (☎ 13 15 00; www.cityrail.info) offers the **DayTripper Pass** (adult/child \$16/8) good on trains, buses and ferries throughout Sydney and its suburbs. The **Blue Mountains ExplorerLink** (adult/child \$45/17) includes a day-return ticket to Katoomba and all-day access to the Explorer Bus that visits 27 attractions in the Blue Mountains.

Health Dr David Millar

CONTENTS

Before You Go	398
Insurance	398
Recommended Vaccinations	398
Medical Checklist	398
Internet Resources	399
Further Reading	399
In Transit	399
Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)	399
Jet Lag & Motion Sickness	399
In New South Wales	399
Availability & Cost of Health Care	399
Infectious Diseases	400
Environmental Hazards	400

Australia is a remarkably healthy 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, and, 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 NSW should 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 this page), but it's a good idea to carry it 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.

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 reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures. See opposite for details of health care in NSW.

INSURANCE

Health insurance is essential for all travellers. While health care in NSW is of a high standard and not overly expensive by international standards, considerable costs can build up and repatriation is extremely expensive. If you are unsure whether your existing insurance will cover you check www.lonelyplanet.com for more information.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

Proof of yellow-fever vaccination is required only from travellers entering Australia within six days of having stayed overnight or longer in a yellow-fever-infected country. For a full list of these countries visit the website of the **World Health Organization** (WHO; www.who.int/wer/) or that of the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (www.cdc.gov/travel/blusheet.htm).

If you're really worried about your health when travelling there are a few vaccinations you could consider for NSW. 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
- anti-diarrhoeal drugs (eg loperamide)
- acetaminophen/paracetamol or aspirin
- anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)

- antihistamines (for hay fever and allergic reactions)
- antibacterial ointment for cuts and 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
- pocketknife
- 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 on the internet. For further information, the **Lonely Planet website** (www.lonelyplanet.com) is a good place to start. The **WHO** (www.who.int/ith/) publishes a superb book called *International Travel & 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.

FURTHER READING

Lonely Planet's *Healthy Travel Australia, New Zealand & the Pacific* is a handy, pocket-sized guide packed with useful information including pretrip 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 also includes advice on travel health for younger children.

IN TRANSIT

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Blood clots may form in the legs (deep vein thrombosis) 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.

TRAVEL-HEALTH WEBSITES

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

United Kingdom www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice

United States www.cdc.gov/travel

The chief symptom of deep vein thrombosis 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 deep vein thrombosis 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 common when crossing more than five time zones, resulting in insomnia, fatigue, malaise or nausea. To avoid jet lag try drinking plenty of nonalcoholic fluids and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural 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 NEW SOUTH WALES

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Australia has an excellent health-care system. It is a mixture of privately run medical clinics and hospitals, and a system of public hospitals funded by the government. The Medicare system covers Australian residents for some health-care costs. Visitors from countries with which Australia has a reciprocal health-care agreement (New Zealand, the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Italy, Malta and Ireland) are eligible for benefits to the extent

specified under the Medicare programme. If you are from one of these countries, check the details before departure. In general, the agreements provide for any episode of ill-health that requires prompt medical attention. For further details visit www.health.gov.au/pubs/mbs/mbs3/medicare.htm.

There are excellent, specialised public-health facilities for women and children in Sydney.

Over-the-counter medications are available at privately owned chemists throughout NSW. 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.

In NSW it is possible to get to remote locations where there may well 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. NSW has extensive mobile phone coverage, but additional radio communications are important for remote areas. The Royal Flying Doctor Service provides an important backup for remote communities.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Bat lyssavirus

Related to rabies and has caused some deaths. The risk is greatest for animal handlers and vets. Rabies vaccine is effective, but the risk to travellers is very low.

Giardiasis

Widespread in the waterways around Australia. Drinking untreated water from streams and lakes is not recommended. Water filters and boiling or treating water with iodine are effective in preventing the disease. Sympt-

oms consist of intermittent bad-smelling diarrhoea, abdominal bloating and wind. Effective treatment is available (tinidazole or metronidazole).

Meningococcal Disease

Occurs worldwide and is a risk with prolonged use of dormitory-style accommodation. A vaccine exists for some types of this disease, namely meningococcal A, C, Y and W. No vaccine is presently available for the viral type of meningitis.

Ross River Fever

Widespread throughout Australia. The virus is spread by mosquitoes living in marshy areas. In addition to fever the disease causes headache, joint and muscular pain and a rash, before resolving after five to seven days.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Occurs at rates 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.

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 or worse. If this occurs, immediately immerse the affected area in hot water (as hot as can be tolerated). Keep topping up with hot water until the pain subsides and medical care can be reached. Marine stings from jellyfish such as box jellyfish also occur in Australia's tropical waters, particularly during the wet season (October to April). The box jellyfish has an incredibly potent sting and has 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 until you have first checked if it is safe with local beach life-saving representatives. '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 any remaining stinging cells, followed by rapid transfer to a hospital; antivenom is widely available.

SHARKS

Despite extensive media coverage, the risk of shark attack in Australian waters is no greater than in other countries with extensive coastlines. The risk of an attack from sharks on scuba divers in NSW is low. Check with local surf life-saving groups about local risks.

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 are endowed with 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 small and 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. Application of an elastic bandage (you can improvise with a T-shirt) wrapped firmly – but not tight enough to cut off the circulation – around the entire limb, along with immobilisation, is a life-saving first-aid measure.

SPIDERS

Australia has a number of poisonous spiders although the Sydney funnel-web is the only one to have caused a single death in the last 50 years. Redback spiders are found throughout NSW. Bites cause increasing pain at the site followed by profuse sweating and generalised symptoms. First aid includes application of ice or cold packs to the bite and transfer to hospital.

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

Heat Illness

Very hot weather is experienced year-round in some parts of NSW. 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 by perspiring, 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. On observation 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. Prevention is 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 these simple rules:

- Carry sufficient water for any trip, including extra in case of breakdown.
- 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.
- In nearly all cases it is better to stay with the vehicle rather than walking for help.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia is a significant risk, especially during the winter months in the southern alpine region of NSW. Despite the absence of high mountain ranges, strong winds produce a high chill factor that can result in hypothermia in even 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 changing the environment to one where heat loss is minimised, changing out of any wet clothing, adding dry clothes with wind 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 evacuation in addition to the above measures.

Insect-Borne Illness

Various insects can be a source of irritation. Protection from mosquitoes, sandflies, ticks and leeches can be achieved by a combination of the following strategies:

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

Surf Beaches & Drowning

NSW has some exceptional surf beaches. Beaches vary enormously in the slope of the underlying bottom, resulting in varying power of the surf. Check with local surf life-saving organisations before entering the surf, and be aware of your own limitations and expertise.

Ultraviolet Light Exposure

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. Monitor exposure to

direct sunlight closely. UV exposure is greatest between 10am and 4pm so avoid skin exposure during these times. Always use 30+ sunscreen, applied 30 minutes before exposure, and repeat regularly to minimise sun damage.

Water-Borne Illness

Tap water is universally safe in NSW. Increasing numbers of streams and rivers and lakes, however, are being contaminated by bugs that cause diarrhoea, making water purification essential. The simplest way of purifying water is to boil it thoroughly. Consider purchasing a water filter. It's very important when buying a filter to read the specifications, so that you know exactly what it removes from the water and what it doesn't. Simple filtering will not remove all dangerous organisms, so if you cannot boil water it should be treated chemically. Chlorine tablets will kill many pathogens, but not some parasites such as giardia and amoebic cysts. Iodine is more effective in purifying water and is available in tablet form. Follow the directions carefully and remember that too much iodine can be harmful.

Glossary

ACT – Australian Capital Territory
arvo – afternoon

back o' Bourke – back of beyond; middle of nowhere

barbie – barbecue

beaut, beauty – great; fantastic

bikies – motorcyclists

billabong – waterhole in a riverbed formed by waters receding in the dry season

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

bitumen – surfaced road

black stump – where the *back o' Bourke* begins

bloke – man

blokey – exhibiting characteristics considered typically masculine

blow flies – large flies

blowies – see *blow flies*

blue – argument or fight ('have a blue')

body board – half-sized surfboard

bogan – young, unsophisticated person

boogie board – small flat board for body surfing

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

bottle shop – liquor shop; off-licence

brekky – breakfast

bush, the – country; anywhere away from the city

bush tucker – native foods

bushie – a person who lives in the bush

bushwalking – hiking

BYO – bring your own; a restaurant license that permits customers to drink alcohol they have purchased elsewhere

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

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

chook – chicken

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

corroboree – Aboriginal festival or gathering for ceremonial or spiritual reasons

cozzie – swimming costume

crook – ill or substandard

cuppa – as in cuppa tea, an outback institution, especially when combined with a yarn

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

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

dinkum – honest or genuine; *true blue*

dob in – to inform on someone

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

dunny – outdoor lavatory

earbash – to talk nonstop

Esky – large insulated box for keeping food and drinks cold

fair dinkum – see *dinkum*

flog – sell; steal

fossick – hunt for gems or semiprecious stones

galah – noisy parrot, thus noisy idiot

game – brave ('game as Ned Kelly')

g'day – good day; traditional Australian greeting

goon – cheap wine, usually from a cask (see *cask wine*)

grazier – sheep or cattle farmer operating on a large scale

grouse – very good

homestead – residence of a *station* owner or manager

how are ya? – standard greeting (expected answer: 'Good, thanks, how are you?')

iffy – dodgy, questionable

jackaroo – male trainee on an *outback station*

jillaroo – female trainee on an *outback station*

kali – jumbo-sized boomerang

kick the bucket – to die

knackered – broken, tired

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

lair – layabout; ruffian

larrikin – hooligan; mischievous youth

lay-by – to put a deposit on an article so the shop will hold it for you

lob in – drop in (to see someone)

lollies – sweets, candy

loo – toilet

mate – general term of familiarity, whether you know the person or not

milk bar – small shop selling milk and other basic provisions

Mod Oz – modern Australian cuisine influenced by a wide range of foreign cuisines, but with a definite local flavour

mozzies – mosquitoes

mug – foolish or gullible person

no worries! – no problems; that's OK!

ocker – uncultivated or boorish Australian; a derider

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

PADI – Professional Association of Diving Instructors

piss – beer; see also *take the piss*

piss up – boozey party

pissed – drunk

pissed off – annoyed

plonk – cheap wine

pokies – poker machines

Pom – English person

reckon! – you bet! Absolutely!

rego – (car) registration

rellie – (family) relative

rip – a strong ocean current or undertow

road train – semitrailer truck towing several trailers

root – to have sexual intercourse

rubbish – to deride or tease

sanger – sandwich

sarni – sandwich

schooner – large beer glass

sealed road – bitumen road

session – lengthy period of heavy drinking

shark biscuit – inexperienced surfer

sheila – woman

she'll be right – no problems; no worries

shellacking – comprehensive defeat

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

sickie – day off work ill (or malingering)

station – large farm

stickybeak – nosy person

stropky – bad-tempered

stubby – 375ml bottle of beer

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

take the piss – deliberately tell someone an untruth, often as social sport; see also *piss*

tea – evening meal

true blue – honest or genuine; *dinkum*

tucker – food

unsealed road – dirt road

ute – utility; a pick-up truck

walkabout – lengthy walk away from it all

whinge – to complain or moan

wobbly – disturbing, unpredictable behaviour ('throw or chuck a wobbly')

woomera – stick used by Aborigines to propel spears

yabbie – small freshwater crayfish

yobbo – uncouth, aggressive person

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