

Getting Started

New South Wales (NSW) is a dream destination for travellers seeking low-fuss, low-maintenance, low-stress fun. The excellent infrastructure and resources mean you can decide you need a holiday on a Tuesday night and be halfway to your destination by Wednesday morning. All budgets are catered for and pre-planning is a concept relegated to school holidays.

WHEN TO GO

Truth be told, any time is a good time to be *somewhere* in NSW. Australia's seasons are the antithesis of those in Europe and the USA. Summer starts in December (when the weather and longer daylight hours are perfect for swimming and other outdoor activities), 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.

Sydney is lovely for much of the year. The temperature rarely falls below 10°C except overnight in winter, and although temperatures can hit 40°C during summer, the average summer maximum is 25°C. The average monthly rainfall ranges from 75mm to 130mm. Much the same can be said for the climate on the coast, although the swimming season starts earlier by a month or more towards Byron Bay.

Canberra is cold in winter and scorching in summer, so spring and autumn are the best times to visit the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

Inland, it gets hot soon after winter and just keeps getting hotter the further you get from the coast and highlands. The outback regularly stays above 40°C.

This temperature variation equates to varying high seasons throughout the state. Along the coast, summer and school and public holidays equals high season. During the Christmas period in particular you'll find yourself competing with hordes of determined Aussie holidaymakers – see Holidays (p376) for more information.

In the southeast snowfields, July to October encompasses high season. Similarly winter is the best (and high) season to visit the Back O' Bourke.

Regardless of where you are, expect spontaneous price rises during the respective high season for everything from accommodation to petrol.

COSTS

NSW is an affordable destination by 'first world' standards, but how much you should budget for depends on what kind of traveller you are. Accommodation will be your greatest expense, followed by transport and food on a fairly even par. Hiring a car, seeing the sights, staying in hotels or motels and enjoying the fabulous food and grog will cost you \$110 to \$160 per person per day. In Sydney you can push that figure up by \$50 or so, but in less-touristed areas like the west, you can reduce it by the same figure.

Travellers with a demanding brood in tow will find there are many inexpensive ways to keep kids satisfied, including beach and park visits, camping grounds and motels equipped with pools and games rooms, junior-sized restaurant meals and youth/family concessions for attractions. For more information on travelling with children see p370.

Backpackers and budget travellers can still take in the sights on \$60 to \$100 per day, by camping or staying in hostels or pubs, self-catering whenever possible and taking the bus.

See Climate (p370) for more information.

LONELY PLANET INDEX

1L petrol	\$1.15-1.40
1L bottle water	\$3
Stubby of VB	\$4
Souvenir T-shirt	\$25

TRAVEL LITERATURE

NSW has been the setting for some of Australian literature's most inspiring, thought-provoking and just plain entertaining works.

Katrina M Schlunke's *Bluff Rock – Autobiography of a Massacre* examines the early relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, centring on the tragic story of Bluff Rock where an alleged massacre of Aborigines occurred in the 1840s.

Acclaimed novelist Peter Carey gives his own account of his home town in *30 Days in Sydney*, a quirky, goofy and highly readable tale from behind the venetian blinds.

The Secret River by Kate Grenville follows an ex-convict who stakes his claim around the Hawkesbury River in the 19th century. It vividly explores issues of identity, belonging and ownership in colonial and contemporary Australia.

The Pilliga Scrub is the focus of *A Million Wild Acres* by Eric Rolls. The book looks at how settlers, failed farms and dead koalas combined to propagate the vast forest of today.

Safety by Tegan Bennett is a tale of non-nuclear love, truth and frailty on the banks of the Parramatta River.

Coined a contemporary fairy tale, Murray Bail's *Eucalyptus* is the story of a widower raising his daughter on a property in western NSW. It is a celebration of the enigmatic Australian bush and the quirky Australian psyche.

Determined is an autobiographical account of Stephen Aracic's journey from Yugoslavia during WWII to Australia and his ensuing love affair with the black opals of Lightning Ridge.

Secret Men's Business by Allan Duffy of Broken Hill is a book of bush ballads and politically incorrect verse. It's a poignant reminder of how different life is in the outback, and of the great range of personalities and local characters you'll meet out there.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Citysearch.com (www.citysearch.com.au) Events, dining, arts, bars and music listings for Sydney.
Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Destination summaries, accommodation and flight bookings, links to related sites, Bluelists and invaluable advice from travellers on the Thorn Tree.

NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au) Official site with reams of information on over 600 parks and reserves.

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- *ABC Travellers Guide* for the frequency of every ABC radio station across NSW
- Comfy sneakers or hiking boots for beach, bush and mountain walks
- Sunscreen, sunglasses and a hat to deflect ultrafierce UV rays (p402)
- A beanie for the Blue Mountains (p119) or the Southeast snowfields (p295)
- Good maps for outback meanders and good sherry for cold, quiet outback nights (p257)
- Extra-pungent insect repellent to ward off merciless flies and mosquitoes (p372)
- A towel and bathers/togs/swimmers/swimming costume/socks/trunks/speedos/budgie smugglers...for the beach
- Valid travel licence, ID card or passport and visa if required (p380)
- An enhanced tolerance to alcohol plus your favourite hangover cure, especially if spending lots of time in Sydney (p95)

TOP FIVES

Must-See Movies

One of the best places to do your essential trip preparation is on a comfy couch with your eyeballs pleurably glued to the small screen. Head down to your local video store to pick up these Australian flicks with a New South Wales bent. See p32 for reviews of some of these and other locally produced films.

- *Lantana* (2001) Directed by Ray Lawrence
- *Jindabyne* (2006) Directed by Ray Lawrence
- *Oyster Farmer* (2004) Directed by Anna Reeves
- *Two Hands* (1999) Directed by Gregor Jordan
- *The Dish* (2000) Directed by Rob Sitch

Eco-Experiences

Eco-tourism is a growing concept in NSW and there are numerous ways you can minimise your environmental footprint while you explore the landscape. We recommend the following five ways to tread lightly:

- Natural Wanders (p64) Kayaking in Sydney Harbour
- Tread Lightly Eco Tours (p125) Bushwalks in the Blue Mountains
- Mountain Bike Tours (p190) Mountain biking in the North Coast hinterland
- Mountain Trails (p175) Eco-friendly 4WD tours near Coffs Harbour
- Paperbark Camp (p329) Eco-friendly and very swish camping in Jervis Bay

Festivals & Events

Australians will seize on just about any opportunity for a celebration – due as much to good-humoured exuberance and an enjoyment of the arts and sport, as any excuse to consume vast amounts of food, wine and beer. These are our top five reasons to get festive – other events are listed on p374, and throughout this book.

- Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race (p69) December to January
- Country Music Festival, Tamworth (p215) January
- Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras (p71) February
- Surfest (p144) March
- East Coast International Blues & Roots Music Festival (p190) September

Sydney Morning Herald (www.smh.com.au) Site for Sydney's best paper, with plenty of news about what's happening in Sydney and NSW.

Tourism New South Wales (www.visitnsw.com.au) Vast amounts of information on accommodation, activities and much more.

Itineraries

CLASSIC ROUTES

THE BLUE MOUNTAIN RUN **One week/Parramatta to Bells Line of Road**

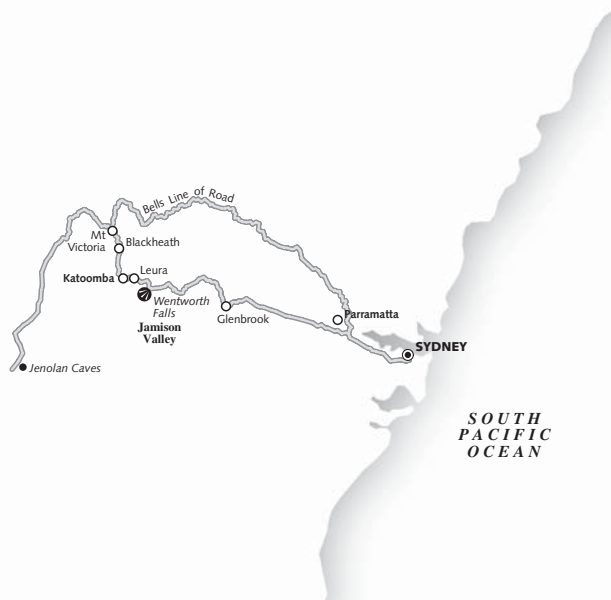
Start in Sydney's mini-me CBD **Parramatta** (p111). Potter through the historic buildings here but then be on your way – the mountains await.

Stop in **Glenbrook** (p121), at the base of the mountains, for Aboriginal hand stencils and the Norman Lindsay Gallery, and get camera happy as you pass Jamison Valley and Wentworth Falls. Spend your first night in gracious **Leura** (p122). Admire the vivid gardens and jaw-dropping views, and cosy up in a boutique B&B for the night.

Next day, continue west to the Blue Mountains' big smoke – **Katoomba** (p123). Bask in the bohemian milieu, relish the gourmet food and mosey through the galleries. Base yourself here for a few nights to explore the national park.

Hit the road again and shift north to **Blackheath** (p127), for some of the mountains' best lookouts. Spend a night in unadulterated **Mt Victoria** (p129) and catch the iconic Mount Vic Flicks. Detour further west to see the troglodytic **Jenolan Caves** (p129) before winding your way back east via **Bells Line of Road** (p130).

This western loop around the dramatic Blue Mountains covers around 300km by road. To best enjoy the scenery and towns of the mountains give yourself a week.



THE LONG COASTAL HAUL

One month/Eden to Tweed Heads

Start your coastal adventure in the state's southern pocket – **Eden** (p341) is a good place to base yourself for national park adventures and your foray into the Tasman Sea. Ambling ever so slightly, stay a while in **Merimbula's** (p339) scenic inlet for spectacular diving, or **Narooma** (p334) for river cruises, good surfing and Montague Island's wildlife.

Next, park yourself in **Murrumbidgee National Park** (p332) for fabulous beachside camping and beautiful surf beaches. Pop into **Ulladulla** (p330) and tackle the climb to Pigeon House Mountain if you're brave. Otherwise continue north to Jervis Bay for wreck dives, dolphin cruises and diminished crowds in **Huskisson** (p328).

Continue north to gorgeous **Berry** (p325) for B&B bliss and wineries. In **Sydney** (p50) you'll need a few days to explore the big smoke. But the beaches, reserves and Sunday afternoons of **Newcastle** (p142) beckon.

Swing by **Port Stephens** (p158) and get lost in the shimmering dunes of Stockton Bight, then meander through the stunning **Myall Lakes National Park** (p160) before hiding out in **Seal Rocks** (p161). Dose up on good food, good wine and good views in pretty **Port Macquarie** (p163) and then go bush with the birdlife and camp in **Hat Head National Park** (p168).

Detour a little to **Bellingen** (p171) for fabulous food and boutique B&Bs and then exhaust yourself rafting, horse riding, surfing and jumping out of planes in **Coffs Harbour** (p174).

Stop in **Yamba** (p182) and **Angourie** (p183) to escape the crowds and make the most of the jaw-dropping views and outstanding seafood. Wind things up with a recovery week in **Byron Bay** (p186), but be sure to visit the fabulous pub at **Brunswick Heads** (p194) and the scenic beaches of **Tweed Heads** (p194).

This classic run takes in NSW's 1400km shoreline. The landscape and climate shift markedly as you climb and the route takes in everything from national park camping to the glitz of Sydney. Allow at least a month to fully enjoy this road trip.



TAILORED TRIPS

THE GROG-GLUTTON'S JUNKET

There are more grapes than we know what to do with in New South Wales, and your help is urgently needed to consume them.

While still in control of your faculties, you'd best start in the obvious location – the Hunter Valley. Start in the 'Lower' (p149) where you'll find old favourites like Wyndham Estate and Lindemans, plus gourmet cheeses and olives to stop the wobbles. Then, pacing yourself mind, make your way north to the 'Upper' (p153) and indulge in spicy cab savs and shiraz. Once you've got the vino goggles fastened, you can venture out west to the wineries of

Mudgee (p235) for a night with the poet and stunning views with Simon. Or if that's too far, stop in **Wagga Wagga** (p276) for award-winning drops and a barbie, or in **Leeton** (p283) for tastings. **Griffith** (p283) has the goods in this neck of the woods though – big names like McWilliam's Hanwood Estate mingle with boutique lovelies.

On the South Coast, **Berry** (p325) and **Nowra** (p328) have slick and fancy wineries, but it's worth making the painless trek to Bermagui for the glorious **Mimosa Cottages & Wines** (p337).

Up north, the wineries accompany their vino with award-winning food around **Port Macquarie** (p163).

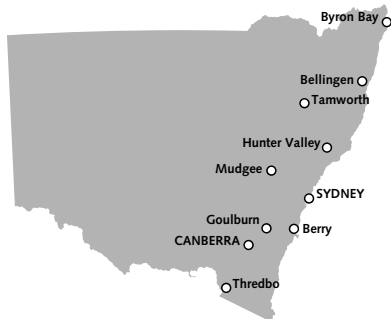


MUSIC FESTIVAL FRENZY

Folk in New South Wales are so enamoured with festivals they'll invent one to mark the mail arriving, and music festivities are a favourite. **Byron Bay's festivals** (p190) include the massive **East Coast International Blues & Roots Music Festival** over Easter and the indie-addict's **Splendour in the Grass** in July. But everything country is bigger and better, including Tamworth's 10-day **Country Music Festival** (p215) in January. Tiny Bellingen fills to bursting in August during the **Bellingen Jazz and Blues Festival** (p172). Out west, the Australian Chamber Orchestra wows the crowds at Mudgee's **Huntington Music Festival** (p236). **Thredbo** (p298) hums to a **Blues Festival** every January and the **Thredbo World Music Festival** in mid-March. Every February **Goulburn** (p312) croons to the sounds of the **Australian Blues Music Festival** and kicks its heels up for the **Irish Music Festival** in June.

The Hunter Valley's vineyards are treated to **Jazz in the Vines** (p151) in October, and on the South Coast, the October **Shoalhaven Jazz and Blues Festival** (p326) kicks off in Berry.

The cities give it a good burl too – Canberra's Parliament House features noise people actually want to hear at the **Australia Day Live Concert** (p356) in January, while Sydney hosts the **Darling Harbour International Jazz Festival** (p69) every June, and the **Manly Jazz Festival** (p69) in October.



Snapshot

Drop some eaves in New South Wales (NSW) at the moment and you'll pick up lively debates covering culture, the environment and all manner of sociopolitical issues. Of course, you may have to wade past talk of the eternal quest to make that disposable income stretch further. At present you need to be on the better side of middle class or prepared to sacrifice your child's education (or, indeed, having a child) if you want to drive a car or add bananas to your Weet-Bix. While there seems to be reasonable explanation for both – the war in Iraq for the former, and Cyclone Larry decimating North Queensland's banana plantations for the latter – most folk find it a stretch for the government to raise interest rates as a result of these two items.

Given NSW's ever-fragile ecology, environmental issues get plenty of airplay and water shortages rate highly. Foreign visitors to the state may be surprised to see billboards reminding residents to shower less, flush less and abandon all thoughts of a green lawn. But dam levels in most urban areas are close to critical and Sydney is consuming water faster than it can sustain supply. Bushfires now commence their summer scourge as early as mid-spring, heightening the need for better water management. In the state's dry west and outback, folk lament the lack of rain, how we need rain, when it last rained and when, please, is it going to rain. Road conditions run a close second out there, but inevitably the conversation simply turns to what the roads will be like when it rains.

Climate change has found its way into the vernacular and although people feel a need to stem the rising temperatures, they don't feel a need for it to hurt their hip pocket. The jury is out on whether nuclear energy is good, bad or just plain ugly. Similarly, there's a great deal of chat around Narooma and Batemans Bay about the proposed Batemans Marine Park, which, if approved, would stretch all the way from Wallaga Lake in the south to Bawley Point in the north. The idea's solid, but locals need to know whether it will hinder commercial fishing and other recreational activities. The good news is that plans to open a new Marine Discovery Centre in Eden (see p341) have been met with firm support from locals, who recognise the lucrative benefits of ecotourism.

In the social corner we have an ongoing discussion about immigration (see p29 for more on why) and whether NSW can sustain multicultural harmony. Most of the population would be appalled at the very thought that it can't, but one-off race riots in Sydney and misinformation about how to identify a 'typical terrorist' demonstrate pockets of tension. For some, the cultural shift that comes with the influx of new identities has been too swift, prompting attempts to distinguish between what is 'Australian' or, more importantly, what is 'un-Australian'. For the most part it seems that 'un-Australian' can be attached to any activity other than beer, football or Australian Idol.

The cost of housing and Sydney's subsequent urban spread in all directions continues to set tongues wagging. Real estate remains the state capital's obsession, now and forever. However, Canberra homeowners are now able to report with pride that their property prices are just about on par. Given the Australian dream to own a house and a dog (see p29) it's not surprising that new homeowners are simply moving further afield.

In the Hunter Valley (p140), bumper crops have become the viticulturist's lament, and overproduction of wine is a big issue. Medium-sized wineries agonise about how to crack the export market while stockpiles

FAST FACTS

Population: 6.8 million

GDP: \$305 billion
(\$45,000 per capita)

People: 94% European descent, 4% Asian, 1.8% Aboriginal

Households with internet connection: 56%

Children playing organised sport: 63%

Percentage of Sydneysiders who own a bike: 30%

Average annual population growth rate: 1.4%

Flag of NSW: British blue ensign that sports the state badge. The flag was adopted in response to British Admiralty criticising the previous flag for being too similar to the Victorian one.

Percentage of household income spent on clothing: 7%; alcohol 8.6%; rent/mortgage 23%

School-age literacy: 96.2%

Median age of brides and grooms: 28.3 years and 30.3 years respectively

of scrummy reds gather dust in their cellars. There is even talk of ripping out the grapes... What is the world coming to?!

Meanwhile tour operators lament the devastating impact of public-liability insurance. Increased premiums are wreaking havoc on small companies, who are also feeling the pinch due to petrol prices, which brings us full circle. For the most part, however, you'll find that folk in NSW consider all these issues secondary to the firm belief that they live on the luckiest plot on earth.

The Authors



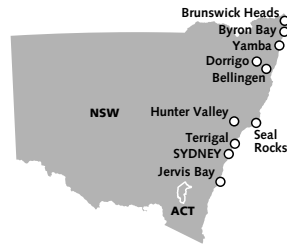
JUSTINE VAISUTIS

Coordinating Author & North Coast

Justine's love affair with the New South Wales coast began when she was barely old enough to fit into swimmers. Once she got the appropriate attire sorted she graduated to spending entire summers on a bodyboard on the South Coast. It compensated for the winter chills of her Canberran childhood. She has since lived in Sydney and traversed the coastline from Eden to Tweed Heads on several occasions. This is her second time round on Lonely Planet's *New South Wales* guide, previously authoring the *Around Sydney* chapter. For this edition she potted about the North Coast, noodling for the best markets, pubs, treks and, of course, bodyboard-beaches. She also wore her swimmers.

My Favourite Trip

My favourite trip would last about two months. It starts with a tent and a car in Jervis Bay and climbs slowly to Sydney for pub sessions, museums and downtime with mates. Then it continues through the Central Coast, where I'd temporarily hang the boots in Terrigal for the beach and more mateship. I'd hit the vino in the Hunter and the surf at Seal Rocks before hiding out in Dorrigo and Bellingen for a while. But time waits for no beach bum, so I'd find my way to the coast again and amble up to Yamba and then Byron for Middle Eastern brekkies and exotic massages. Last stop would be Brunswick Heads, where I'd spend my remaining days in its fabulous pub.



LINDSAY BROWN

Australian Capital Territory

Lindsay hails from Wollongong and has fractured memories of school excursions to Canberra to see how government worked and how planned cities were supposed to work. A lot has changed in and around the national capital and he enjoyed the challenge of negotiating the circuits and roundabouts one more time for this book. As a Lonely Planet author Lindsay has contributed to several titles including *Australia*, *Queensland & The Great Barrier Reef*, *East Coast Australia* and *Northern Territory & Central Australia*.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are independent, dedicated travellers. They don't research using just the internet or phone, and they don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage. They travel widely, to all the popular spots and off the beaten track. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, cafés, bars, galleries, palaces, museums and more – and they take pride in getting all the details right, and telling it how it is. For more, see the authors section on lonelyplanet.com.



JOCELYN HAREWOOD

Central West, Back o' Bourke & The Riverina

Jocelyn was fascinated to see how much the Riverina had changed since she used to holiday there twenty-odd years ago, but Back o' Bourke was the big adventure – just as her dad taught her, helped by Ion L Idriess' books. Central West weaved its own magic throughout her childhood as her three brothers were always heading off to Bathurst for motor racing, and the whole family was into star-gazing. It was a thrill to finally check out all the activities on offer up that way.



WENDY KRAMER

Hunter Valley, New England & Northwest

Whether boot-scooting in Tamworth or chitchatting with opal miners in Lightning Ridge, this little lady feels completely comfortable wherever she may travel – particularly in the Hunter Valley where she has fond memories of playing between the oak barrels at the old Saxonvale Winery as a child (but not-so-fond memories of being clobbered in the head by a stray gumboot during a gumboot-throwing competition at the winery). However, she loves the beach and the love of her life is Newcastle, so it's little surprise Wendy quit her job and bought a unit there while researching this book. Life is short and the world is wide, but Newcastle is home.



CHARLES RAWLINGS-WAY

Sydney & Around Sydney

Growing up a shy, unkempt Tasmanian, Charles harboured a secret lust for Sydney's dangerous curves. When he finally mustered the nerve to ask for a date, her cool bars and warm beaches washed over him like a tide – lust turned into love and inescapable fascination.

A lapsed architect, underrated rock guitarist and optimistic home renovator, Charles greased the production cogs at Lonely Planet's HQ for many years before becoming a freelance travel writer in 2005. He regularly flees Melbourne's calmer cultures for a walk on Sydney's wild side, and to visit his mum. In between paragraphs, Charles keeps one eye on his next adventure and the other on fellow LP wordsmith Meg Worby.



PENNY WATSON

Southeast & South Coast

Penny Watson is a journalist of 12 years' experience and a full-time travel writer who splits her time between Melbourne and Seville, Spain. She grew up in Albury and spent much of her early years road-tripping in the surrounding small towns and countryside and swimming in the Murray River. With half her family now residing in Sydney, Penny has become ever adept at making the Melbourne–Albury–Sydney round trip more interesting. 'A good country pub can work wonders,' she says, 'as can a secluded beach where it's just you, the view and the big blue.'

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

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

Dr Tim Flannery is one of Australia's leading thinkers and writers. An internationally acclaimed scientist, explorer and conservationist, he was the recipient of the prestigious Australian of the Year award in 2007. He is a leading member of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists, which reports independently to government on sustainability issues. Former director of the South Australian Museum, Tim is chairman of the South Australian Premier's Science Council and Sustainability Roundtable. He takes up a position at Sydney's Macquarie University in mid-2007.

Dr David Millar is a travel medicine specialist, diving doctor and lecturer in wilderness medicine who graduated in Hobart, Tasmania. He has worked in all states of Australia (except the Northern Territory) and as an expedition doctor with the Maritime Museum of Western Australia, accompanying a variety of expeditions around Australia, including the *Pandora* wreck in Far North Queensland and Rowley Shoals off the northwest coast. David is currently a medical director with the Travel Doctor in Auckland.

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