





# AWESOME AUSTRALIA

*AUSTRALIA MAY BE BEST KNOWN AS THE LAND DOWN UNDER, BUT IT IS RICH IN NATURAL SPLENDOR AND HAS BEEN VALUED FOR CENTURIES.*

**A** SURVEY RELEASED BY TRAVEL Web site Lonely Planet ranked Australia as the number one destination global independent travelers would like to visit next as well as the top place they have previously visited. According to Tourism Australia, 4.4 million travelers visited the country in 2003.

Travelers flock to Australia for its endless sun-drenched beaches, breathtaking sunsets and tropical rainforests with beautiful wildlife. Scattered along its coasts, Australian cities are destinations in their own right. Each offers the visitor a new experience. Some are known for their outdoor lifestyle, others for fabulous dining, fashion or art. Each has its own sense of history and charm.

Sunny, sexy and sophisticated, Sydney is the shining star of the Southern Hemisphere. The stunning Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge are the pride and joy, but there's much more. Visitors to Sydney frequent the newest restaurant, cafe or bar, the grooviest new promenade, or the smartest, nearest beach. There's an energy and boldness in Sydney that is irrepressible and uplifting. It's urbane, but fresh and curious.

STORY BY LINDA ESTERSON





(left) Sydney's sparkling harbor is one of the many jewels of Australia. (below) Koalas happily reside in Australia's many forests. (right) A cultural hub of Australia, Melbourne, is known for its style and sophistication in architecture, food and fashion.



With its wonderful climate and care-free lifestyle, Sydney has inspired some stunning young designers who have taken the multilayered cultural influences and translated them into fashion. Sydney is a find for “shopaholics.”

It is said that Sydney never sleeps. In daylight hours the city buzzes with life and it doesn't close down when workers leave their offices. Late-night meals or a final coffee are not problematic. Be seen on trendy Oxford Street from Darlinghurst to Paddington or try the Woolloomooloo Finger Wharf, Surry Hills, the Quay or the Rocks. So many choices make it hard to decide what to do.

Sydney is also an architectural dream. Many homes overlook the

water or nestle in the bush and are suspended over cliffs or dug back into the scenery. Sydney's sparkling harbor is the jewel in the city's crown. It's flanked by golden beaches and bushland and is bisected by one of the most famous bridges in the world. Islands sprinkle its waters, and it's crisscrossed by all manner of craft, from water taxis and yachts to tour boats and ferries.

Melbourne, Victoria's capital and cultural hub, is known for the good things in life—fashion, food and sport. This is a city of style, architecture, trams and art. Canberra, the nation's capital, is home to many of Australia's most important public buildings and art works.

Melbourne has mastered the art of mixing the old with the new. Gracious older buildings sit side by side dynamic new architecture. Melbourne's rich history is explored along the Golden Heritage Mile. Melbourne is the center of architectural adventure in Australia and this is evident in the brave new designs appearing in some of its newer developments. The distinctive and striking

## First Settlers



In 1788, the first settlers set foot on Australian soil as Captain Arthur Phillip, Australia's first governor, led an 11-ship fleet carrying 736 convicts and their guards into Port Jackson, now known as Sydney Harbour. Convicts holding sentences of varying severity, some as moderate as stealing a loaf of bread, were sent away to work off their time. By the end of the transport in 1852, 160,000 convicts had been brought to Australia. Many who completed their sentences chose to stay

in Australia as farmers and laborers.

Australia attracted free settlers beginning in 1793 with the

promise of cheap land and convict labor. However, after the discovery of gold and copper in 1850, Australian settlement occurred in greater numbers.

Migrants from Europe, China and America all came to seek their fortunes in the gold fields. Few were successful, and many settled and endeavored as shopkeepers, farmers and laborers. The gold rush affected the economic and population levels of Australia, as well as the development of Australian nationalism. As the cities grew and road and train lines were established, Australia declared itself a federation on January 1, 1901.

Today, nearly 200 different nationalities call Australia home. Much of the post-war immigrants hailed from Britain and European countries and later, from South East Asia and New Zealand.



design of Federation Square is one of the most ambitious and complex projects ever undertaken in Australia. A fusion of arts and events, leisure, hospitality and promenading, it has changed the face of Melbourne.

Sports-mad Melbourne is home to world-famous sporting events such as

the Melbourne Cup, the Australian Open Tennis and the Qantas Australia Grand Prix. As for the biggest names from the music world, as well as major theatrical productions, it's most likely they'll be seen in Melbourne first.

And food is aplenty in Melbourne.

The influence of decades of immigration from all over the world has made Melbourne a paradise for those who love food and wine. Whole streets are dedicated to food, whether it be Indian, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Chinese, Greek, or a host of other styles, and the world-class wines can't be missed.

Across the southern tip of Victoria, well south of Melbourne, is the Great Ocean Road, which winds around dramatic cliffs with the surf of the Southern Ocean swelling below. Victoria's Great Ocean Road passes beaches and coves, quiet seaside villages and spots to enjoy brilliant sun and surf. Some of the world's best beaches are found along the Great Ocean Road. From protected family coves to pounding surf, there is a stretch of coast to suit everyone.

On the west coast, Perth is a sophisticated, scenic city with plenty to do. A variety of tours are provided by motorized tram or courtesy bus. One of Perth's most popular icons is the 400 hectares of natural bush that form the spectacular Kings Park in the city's center.

Perth is also the home of the world's oldest operating mint, numerous museums and art galleries, his-

## Natural Resources

Australia is abundant in natural resources and thus considered the jewel of the Asia-Pacific. Its lands are plentiful with such treasures as bauxite, coal, iron-ore, copper, tin, silver, uranium, nickel and tungsten, as well as mineral sands, lead, zinc, diamonds, natural gas and petroleum.

One of the world's largest producers of minerals and metals, Australia mines more than 60 minerals and ores in addition to light crude oil and liquefied natural gas, and its large coal deposits enable the inexpensive production of electricity.

Australia is known as a chief producer of precious and semi-precious stones. In fact, the country mines 95 percent of the world's rare opals and 99 percent of black opals. The Argyle Diamond Mine in Northwestern Australia, one of the world's largest producers of natural diamonds, yields 25 to 30 million carats annually. It is renowned for its champagne diamonds and highly prized pink diamonds. In addition, Australia produces 60 percent of the world's South Sea pearls.

Gold is also mined in large quantities in Australia. The largest single mass of gold found in the world was the Holtermann Nugget at Hill End, New South Wales, in 1872. It weighed 285.8 kilograms with a gold content of 99.8 kilograms.







## Australia at a Glance

- Australia is the sixth largest country in the world. Its area totals about the same size as the continental United States and is approximately 50 percent larger than Europe. Yet, Australia has the lowest population density in the world—only two people per square kilometer.
- Australia lays claim to more than 7,000 beaches—more than any other nation.
- About 95 percent of the world's opals and 99 percent of black opals are produced in Australia.
- The kangaroo is unique to Australia and one of its most easily recognizable mammals. There are more kangaroos in Australia now than when the country was first settled, with numbers estimated at 40 million.
- Australia's 140 million sheep produce more than 70 percent of the world's wool.
- With 24 million head of cattle, Australia is the world's largest exporter of beef.
- Australia supports at least 25,000 species of plants, while Europe only supports 17,500.

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toric character buildings, a five-star resort and casino and a great variety of shopping. There are also world-class golf courses, countless outdoor activities and water sports on the Swan River, and over 80 kilometers of white sandy beaches, most with world-class beachside restaurants. A popular beach is Cottesloe, a pretty crescent of sand with safe swimming and a small surf break. Another location popular with locals and visitors is Scarborough, which has white sand stretching for miles.

The capital of South Australia, Adelaide, nestles between sea and hills. It is a graceful city of wide streets, elegant buildings and parkland. Cultural pursuits, good food and wine are high on the agenda.

Adelaide is compact and easy to walk around. It is known for its refinement and has a charm and grace that shows in sophisticated wining and dining, and beautiful architecture that has been well-preserved.

Adelaide's famous central market is a great way to start the day, before heading for markets in the Adelaide Hills to discover some of the region's fresh produce. Nearly 50 nationalities

showcase their specialties in what must be one of the most multicultural meeting places in the country. Fishmongers, greengrocers, fruit growers and butchers compete with a brigade of buskers. Galleries at Metal and Stone specialize in silver and jewels. The JamFactory and the Gray Street Workshop artists and craftspeople produce an eclectic range of goods in leather, jewels, metal, glassware and all sorts of functional pieces.

In Australia's Northern Territory sits Darwin, a vibrant, tropical capital city perched on a deepwater port, offering a blend of cosmopolitan and city pleasures. Darwin is set upon one of Australia's prettiest harbors, opening out onto the brilliant, jewel-like waters of the Arafura Sea. This vibrant, tropical city has a free-spirited, open-air lifestyle blessed with a range of waterfront delights. Beaches, bays and waterholes are there aplenty to explore and enjoy.

Darwin is closer to Asia than it is to Sydney so it has the vigor expected of a city that is home to 50 ethnic groups. This means the food is great! Not only do the finest chefs create masterpieces with great seafood, crocodile, buffalo,

(left) Breathtaking Ayers Rock is the world's largest monolith rising 318m above the desert floor with a circumference of 8 km. It is considered once of the great wonders of the world. (below top) Driving the Great Coast Road offers magnificent views of the warm ocean waters and seaside cliffs. (right) Snorkelers in one of the barrier reefs swim with the fish and view the spectacular water life.



camel or emu, there is a vast variety of cuisine offered with Asian and European influences. Diners never want for a “coldie,” (cold beer) in Darwin, but they also enjoy first-class restaurants serving the best in fine wines. Darwin is buzzing with a lively selection of entertainment: nightclubs, a casino, theatres, restaurants and its multicultural markets are internationally famous.

More than 20 national parks and reserves surround Darwin; some are

famous, like Kakadu National Park, and some are hidden treasures, just as rich in dramatic beauty, wildlife and Aboriginal culture.

### Friendly Fare

In Australia, the locals are friendly and accommodating, never feeling “put out” by a tourist request and always willing to lend a hand. Cabbies refuse to accept tips, always wanting to help every passenger experience the beauty of Australia.

The citizens are proud of their country and willingly share all they know about it. They work hard to accommodate tourists, especially families, and show a lot of pride in their manners and the cleanliness everywhere – restaurants, tourist spots and along the waterways.

Australia has a lot to offer, with its picturesque mountains, welcoming beaches and bustling cities. It's a great place to go to get a little bit of everything. ■