



Helping You Feel at
Home Abroad

Relocation Guide to Sydney, Australia

www.iorworld.com

[Visit IOR's Global Services Knowledge Center for Sydney](#)

IOR makes every effort to ensure the information contained in this guide is as current as possible. If you notice errors, or information which is no longer accurate, please contact us immediately so we may correct the issue.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SYDNEY OVERVIEW	1
DAILY LIVING TIPS	3
SYDNEY RESOURCES.....	5
HOUSING AND UTILITIES.....	8
EMERGENCY	11
HEALTH FACILITIES	12
SCHOOLS & CHILDCARE	14
BANKING & MONEY MATTERS.....	16
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION & DRIVING	17
LOCAL REGISTRATIONS & DRIVER'S LICENSE	21
SHOPPING	22
CULTURE & RECREATION	24
INTERNATIONAL GROUPS/CLUBS	27
HOLIDAYS	28

SYDNEY OVERVIEW



Photo by [Go Australia](#)

At about 5 million people, Sydney is the most populous city in Australia. It is the state capital of New South Wales and is located on the world's largest natural harbor (Port Jackson). While Sydney was originally established as a penal colony in 1788 by British settlers, the city now boasts a global economy centered on finance, manufacturing and tourism. The people of Sydney – known as “Sydneyiders” – come from a variety of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds; over 250 languages are spoken and about a third of the city speaks a language other than English at home.

Sydney is easily recognized by the unique outline of the Sydney Opera House on its skyline, but it is also known as one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world. The city reflects a considerable diversity with a wide variety of restaurants and festivals from all over the world. Sydneyiders take pride in the scenic views, pleasant climate and the distinctly vibrant lifestyle that the city has to offer. In 2000, Sydney was vaulted to the global forefront when it hosted the Summer Olympics, which the IOC Chairman referred to as “the best games ever, and has since become a major international city.

Yet Sydney is not just a concrete jungle, boasting stunning beaches like the famous Bondi Beach or nature parks like Sydney Harbour National Park (don't be alarmed, Australians, like the British, love to throw that “u” in their words). Living in Sydney truly is the best of both worlds with the towering skyscrapers and bustle of the city, juxtaposed against the natural beauty and serenity of nature, right at your fingertips.

Climate

Sydney has a temperate climate, dominated by warm summers and mild winters. Rainfall occurs year-round but is most common between March and June. Overall, the average temperature ranges from 10-17°C (50-63°F) with average monthly minimums at 8°C (46°F) and average monthly maximums at 26°C (79°F). Extreme temperatures are more common in the inland western suburbs due to wind patterns.

Summers (December to February) in Sydney can be dry and hot because of the northwesterly winds from the outback. Daily temperatures range from 17-26°C (63-79°F) with about 20 days of sunshine per month.

Autumn (March to May) conditions begin in the last few weeks March with cooler humid nights and are known for pleasant temperatures. Daily temperatures range from 11-24°C (52-75°F) with about 20 days of sunshine per month. During this season, overcast mornings can be expected.

Winters (June to August) are fairly mild. As with autumn, it is common to observe foggy mornings (especially in the Western areas). While its precipitation is high throughout this season, June is usually quite rainy. Daily temperatures range from 11-24°C (52-75°F) with about 21 days of sunshine per month.

During the spring (September to November) the days are slightly longer, averaging about 8 hours a day (compared with about 6/7 during the rest of the year). Spring tends to be warm and sunny, but it is much less consistent than other seasons- so be sure to check the weather often. Daily temperatures range from 11-24°C (°F) with about 20 days of sunshine per month.

Sources: [City of Sydney](#) , [Sydney Office of Environment](#)

Map of Sydney



Source: [Living in Sydney](#)

DAILY LIVING TIPS

For additional cultural insights, go to [IOR Global Services Knowledge Center](#)

Your IOR DS Consultant can assist with these items and any questions; please call for assistance.

Also please note that the customs advice portion of this section consists of recommendations; not all native Sydneysiders will agree with them. Do what feels right, and keep this advice in mind.

- Australians in general appreciate “pithiness” while conversing, meaning that both small talk and discussing business matters should include a short summary of one’s thoughts.
- Bartering is not practiced in Australia, unlike many other cultures. The price you see is almost always going to be the price you pay. Bartering may be considered rude by some.
- Australians do not draw attention to their academic or professional achievements and tend to distrust people who do.
- Australians will commonly use “G’day (mate)” as a common greeting, but it can sound patronizing coming from a foreigner.
- Barbeques or “barbies” are a national pastime and you will be more than likely invited to one. Common courtesy dictates that you bring beer or wine for your own personal consumption.
- Table manners are essential and continental. Hold your fork in the left hand and knife in the right while eating and cutting. Keep your elbows off and hands above the table while eating.
- Australians in general tend to be quite “colorful” in their speech, using certain words that may be deemed vulgar by some cultures. Like “G’day”, it can be misinterpreted when coming from a foreigner; stay away from using them and don’t be offended if heard, use of these words usually indicate the speaker’s fondness of the listener (even if that sounds contradictory).
- Business cards are exchanged without formal ritual and are not required. If you are not given a business card upon introduction with someone, it’s not an insult like with some Eastern cultures.
- Tipping is neither customary nor required, as service workers are paid at least the minimum wage. If the service is exceptional and you feel inclined to tip, 10% is an appropriate amount.
- Restaurants in Sydney, in contrast to other Australian cities, usually have the server bring the bill to the table rather than paying as you walk out.
- Australia runs on 240V, 50 Hz current. Plug adapters are needed if you plan on bringing personal electronics or appliances from your home country.
- Sydney businessmen usually wear a grey-charcoal suit, rather than black or navy blue, while conducting business, so purchasing one ahead of time would be a smart investment.
- In Australia they drive on the left side of the road, so remember when crossing the street to check your right side first if you’re from a right-side driving country.
- Beer, wine and liquor are only sold in liquor stores. Other countries allow the sale of alcohol in grocery and convenience stores, but if you’re looking purchase alcohol, you will need to find yourself a liquor store.

AUSTRALIAN IDIOMS

Idioms are words, phrases, or expressions that are not taken literally- they have meaning beyond a literal translation of the words. Idioms are generally used in casual, familiar conversation but can also come up in certain business settings. Here are some examples of commonly used Australian English idioms:

- **As crook as Rockwood** – Seriously ill. “Crook” being really sick, at death’s door, and Rockwood is the biggest cemetery in Australia.
- **Face like a dropped pie** – ugly. If someone uses this to describe you, it’s not a good thing!
- **Firies** – slang for firefighters.
- **Fit as a Mallee bull** – means very fit and strong, in good physical condition. The Mallee is a harsh, dry area in Australia where one would need to be tough to survive.
- **Go off like a frog in a sock** – go berserk, have a fit.
- **Kangaroos loose in the top paddock** – used to describe someone who is eccentric or not bright.
- **Knock up** – to wake up.
- **Like a mad woman’s breakfast** – all over the place or messy.
- **Macca’s** – slang for McDonald’s restaurants.
- **Neck oil** – slang for beer.
- **Stoked** – to be excited about or for something.
- **Stone the crows** – an expression of amazement. “Well stone the crows, he’s done it!”
- **Thongs** – slang for flip flop sandals.
- **Two-pot screamer** – someone who can’t hold their drink. A pot is a half-pint glass.
- **Woop woop** – any isolated place.

Source: [BBC](#)

Government

Australia is a Parliamentary Democracy under a constitutional monarchy, formally referred to as the Commonwealth of Australia. Australia's first constitution was written in 1900 and was effective 1 January 1901 when it officially gained independence from the U.K. Powers are divided between a central government and individual states.

There are three arms of government in Australia: the Legislature (or **Parliament**) is responsible for debating and voting on new laws to be introduced under the power of section 51. The Parliament can also propose changes to the constitution, but in order to become effective has to receive a double majority (majority of all votes and a majority of all states) in a national referendum.

The Executive (the **Australian Government**) is responsible for enacting and upholding the laws established by the legislature. Certain members of the legislature (called ministers) are also members of the Executive, with special responsibilities for certain areas of the law.

The Judiciary is the legal arm of the federal government. The head of the Judiciary branch is the High Court of Australia. It is independent of the other two arms and is responsible for enforcing the laws and deciding whether the other two arms are acting within their powers. The Judiciary arm operates under the English-based Common Law system.

Australia is comprised of six states with Sydney being the capital of New South Wales (NSW), and though it is the largest city in the country, the national capital is located in Canberra. Each state retains the right to determine its own laws over matters not controlled by the Commonwealth under Section 51. Each state has all three national branches of government in smaller and localized forms.

Australian politics is dominated by two major political parties, but minor parties and even micro parties do exist and exert more power than their American or Japanese counterparts. The two major parties are the Australian Labor Party (ALP) who are center-left in ideology and the Liberal Party who are more conservative. The three other minor parties include the centrist Australian Democrats, the leftist Greens and social conservative Family First party.

- Chief of State: Queen Australia Elizabeth II
- Head of Government: Prime Minister Malcom Turnbull
- Cabinet: Nominated by prime minister from members of Parliament
- Legislature: Legislative Council, 76 seats
- Highest Court: High Court of Australia

[City of Sydney Government](#)

Economy

Sydney's economy is characterized by free trade, limited government intervention and an extensive service industry. It is the world's leading financial center in the Asia-Pacific and the largest economy in Australia. Other major industries include: manufacturing, insurance, and international trade. Sydney has particularly strong links to economies of Japan, China and The United States, as well good trade relations with Korea, New Zealand, Germany and the UK.

- Currency: Australian Dollar, AUD or A\$
 - The Australian Dollar comes in denominations of \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 notes.
 - Coins come in 5, 10, 20, and 50 cents as well as \$1 and \$2 denominations.

[Reserve Bank of Australia](#)

[Industry in New South Wales](#)

Language

While Australia has no official language, English is widely regarded as the *de facto* national language in the legal, professional and business sectors. Australian English is a major variety of the language with a distinctive accent and lexicon and differs slightly from other varieties of English in grammar and spelling. Sydney has considerable linguistic diversity: around 30% of its residents speaking a language aside from English at home. Many first and second generation migrants to Sydney are also bilingual.

Languages spoken at home:

- (Native)English speakers: 81% of population
- Mandarin speakers: 1.7% of population
- Italian speakers: 1.5% of population
- Arabic speakers: 1.4% of population
- Cantonese speakers: 1.3% of population
- Greek speakers: 1.3% of population
- Vietnamese speakers: 1.2% of population
- Other languages: 10.6% of population

Government offices – Passes and Permits

- [Department of Education](#)
- [Department of Health](#)
- [Department of Employment](#)
- [Australian Visa Guide](#)
- [Department of Immigration](#)

Newspapers

- [The Sydney Morning Herald](#)
- [The Australian](#)
- [Australian Financial Review](#) (colloquially called “Fin” or “Fin Review”)
- [The Daily Telegraph Australia](#)
- [Herald Sun](#)

Post Office

Postal services are efficient and of high quality. You will find post offices in major city areas and follow [this link](#) to find one closest to you. You can buy stamps online, at post office, or even at news agencies. It is relatively inexpensive to ship your purchases back home from any Post Office. Any mail weighing less than 250 grams is \$1 to ship domestically and \$1.85 to ship internationally. Post offices offer many services besides delivering mail including money orders, international currency conversion, prepaid debit cards, and travel/car insurance.

HOUSING AND UTILITIES

The Real Estate market in Sydney has been tight and pricey these past few years, but this may change soon as the market tips into oversupply; then perhaps there will be no shortage of housing in Sydney in the foreseeable future. If you're looking to decide where to live, you need to address the following concerns:

- What is your budget?
- How close do you want to be to work?
- How will you get to work?
- Do you have space for children?

Once you determine what areas work for you and your family, you will need to contact a broker. Most real-estate listings, whether to rent or buy, are done via a broker in Sydney.

Neighborhoods

Sydney offers a wide range of neighborhoods to fit any and everyone's wants and needs.

Family Friendly Areas

- Lower North Shore: Located within 6-8kms of downtown, these affluent suburbs have a great village feel, offer quick access to Balmoral Beach and have excellent state and private schools.
- North Shore: A popular family area located close to the city and shopping facilities. These neighborhoods have great harbor and bushland walks the whole family will enjoy.
- Upper North Shore: Families are attracted to these suburbs for their peace and quiet and the ample amount of space available. Well-serviced by trains and the CBD is 20-40 minutes away.

Young Professional Friendly Areas

- City Central: A mere 1-2kms from the CBD and filled with excellent nightlife and modern apartment complexes, the Inner City is a favorite amongst young professionals.
- Eastern Suburbs: With excellent nightlife, shopping facilities, quick access to the Eastern beaches and the CBD, and a wide range of housing options, it's now wonder that the Eastern Suburbs are considered to be the most exclusive area in Sydney.

Beach Lovers

- Northern Beaches: Manly, north of Sydney Harbor, has stunning surfing beaches and delicious restaurants. Manly mainly is comprised of apartments, with a few Victorian houses.
- Eastern Beaches: Less expensive than the Eastern Suburbs, these areas are popular amongst young people who love the beach and the city equally. Plethora of good restaurants and bars.

Finding a Broker

Local realty agencies are camped out throughout the city and specialize in the areas they are located in. Actual offices will have the most up-to-date information, but websites give a good idea of what's on the market.

Some of the larger residential real-estate agencies are:

- [Collier's International](#)
- [LJ Hooker](#)
- [Laing + Simmons](#)
- [McGrath](#)
- [The Agency](#)
- [First National Real Estate Australia](#)
- [Regency](#)

Keep in mind the cost of renting a place depends on:

- **Location.** Popular residential areas are close to the central business district.
- **Size and condition** of the place.
- **Amenities.** Condominiums with full facilities may command a higher price. Rent also depends on whether the place is furnished, partially furnished or unfurnished.

Tips for Renting a Home

- Rental contracts in Sydney run a minimum of 6 months for flats and 1 year for homes.
- Australian rental contracts include a bond (amount repayable advances) - usually a 4 - week rental amount. At the end of the lease if the rental is in good order, the deposit will be refunded in full. It is very common for small repairs or cleaning costs to be deducted from the bond at the end of the lease even for a well looked after property.
- If a landlord wants to make changes to the lease agreement like the amount of rent charged, they are required to notify the tenant at least 60 days in advance.
- It's important to note that in Australia it's illegal for an agent to rent a property without the tenant having viewed it first. Some agents hold opening viewings or open houses, where anyone can view. These can be competitive, so turn up early and be prepared.

Fees

The broker's commission is usually equal to one month's rent; split 50-50 between the landlord and tenant. Most landlords require one month's worth of rent for the bond and the first month's rent paid up front. Be wary and read your lease very carefully to uncover any hidden fees that may exist.

Documents

You can expedite the process by having your passport or photo ID, visa, rental payment history, employment letter and contract on hand. Prospective tenants often have to put down a deposit and sign

a provisional agreement to hold onto an apartment. These agreements can be broken, however, and should not be taken as a promise.

Utilities

Tenants are usually responsible to pay for utilities, including water, electricity and gas.

Electricity

When setting up electric service in Sydney, there are many providers but the two largest are:

- [Australian Gas Light Company \(AGL Energy\)](#) servicing all of New South Wales
AGL Energy Limited, Level 22, 101 Miller St, North Sydney, NSW 2060
24-hour Emergency Hotline: 131 909
Customer Services: 131 245 (office hours)
- [Alinta Energy NSW](#) - servicing all of New South Wales
20 Bridge St, Sydney, NSW 2000
Tel: (61) 13 37 02
[Facebook](#)

Gas

AGL Energy also supplies a gas to a large amount of Sydneysiders. See their website for details. Besides AGL, EnergyAustralia is another main provider of gas to Sydney.

- [Energy Australia](#)
level 33, 385 Bourke St, Melbourne, VIC 3000
Customer Service Hotline Tel: 61 3 8628 1000

Water

[Water Supplies Department](#)

1 Smith St, Parramatta, NSW 2150

Question hotline: 13 20 92

[Other phone numbers and helpful links](#)

Telephone service providers:

- [Telstra](#)
 - Billing Questions Tel: 13 22 00
 - Faults and Technical Issues Tel: 125 111
 - [Store Finder](#)
- [Optus](#)
 - Customer Service 24 Hour Hotline Tel: 1 800 500 002
 - Sales Team Tel: 1 800 780 219
 - [Support Page](#)
- [Vodafone](#)
 - Customer Hotline (domestic) Tel: 1 300 650 410
 - Customer Hotline (international) Tel: 61 426 320 000

EMERGENCY

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

EMERGENCIES/POLICE/AMBULANCE/FIRE - DIAL 000 (toll-free)

For

NON URGENT POLICE ASSISTANT – DIAL 131 444 (toll-free)

They will ask for the following information so keep this page close to your phone:

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE

Other Important Numbers:

- American Consulate:
 - Level 10, MLC Centre, 19-29 Martin Place, Sydney, NSW 2000
 - Tel: 61 2 9373 9200
- British Consulate:
 - Level 16 Gateway Building, 1 Macquarie Pl, Sydney, NSW 2000
 - 61 (0)2 9247 7521
- [List of Consulates](#)
- Police Hotline: 131 444
- Sydney Tourism Board 61 2 9360 1111
- Sydney International Airport 61 2 9667 9111
- Sydney Immigration Department 61 13 18 81
- Consumer Council 13 32 20
- Department of Health 61 2 9391 9000
- Customs Department 61 1300 558 287
- Sydney Post 61 13 13 18
- Bureau of Meteorology (weather information) 61 2 9296 1555

HEALTH FACILITIES

The quality of medical care in Sydney is excellent and covered largely through government subsidies in the form of Medicare. However, Medicare is only available to Australian citizens and permanent visa holders, therefore many expats are forced to take out their own private health insurance coverage. In most instances, expats can transfer health insurance from back home to an Australian insurance fund.

Waiting times at hospital emergency rooms can be lengthy for non-emergency patients, since people are prioritized according to their situation. However, according to 2011-12 statistics from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 50% of patients received care in 21 minutes or less and 90% received care in 108 minutes or less.

Australians are subjected to hot temperatures and prolonged sun exposure on a nearly daily basis. Skin cancer accounts for about 80% of all newly diagnosed cancers in Australia, with 95-99% of skin cancer cases being caused by exposure to the sun. Wear appropriate clothing and sunscreen to protect your skin and well-being.

Heat stroke is also common when hiking or anytime during the hot summer months. Carry enough water and take scheduled rests before you feel unwell.

Wild Animals

While the city proper of Sydney does not contain a wild animal population, the outlying areas may house animal species that are foreign and dangerous to expats. Certain species like the box jellyfish, bull sharks, crocodiles and funnel web spiders are extremely hazardous and should not be approached or meddled with. Just like wild animals in your home country, exercise caution when in their presence and learn the appropriate steps to take if approached or injured by these animals.

Medical Facilities

- Australia is known for having some of the highest-standards of health service facilities in the world.
- Seeing a professional is as easy as walking off the street and making an appointment with the receptionist. Generally you will be seen within an hour or less, but take note of the opening times displayed at the window of the office.
- Routine doctor visits will require full payment at the time of the visit, but may subsequently be covered by insurance.
- Pharmacies also go by the name Chemists and are easily found in most neighborhoods. Many pharmacists will offer the option of a cheaper 'generic' drug manufacturer when filling a prescription.

Public and Private hospitals in Sydney

Sydney offers a wide selection of good hospitals in and around the city. The Sydney Hospital, Sydney Eye Hospital and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital are centrally located; to the southwest are the Sydney Private Hospital and the Holroyd Private Hospital.

- [Balmain Hospital](#)
29 Booth Street, Balmain
- [Prince of Wales Private Hospital](#)
Barker Street, Randwick
- [Royal Prince Alfred Hospital](#)
Missenden Road, Camperdown
- [Sydney Children's Hospital](#)
High Street, Randwick

Health Insurance

There are two types of health insurance in Australia: hospital and general treatment. Hospital policies cover you when you go to the hospital for any reason, while general treatment policies cover you for ancillary treatment (e.g. dental, physiotherapy). You can buy them separately or most funds offer combined policies. If you're purchasing coverage for the first time, you need to serve a waiting period before you can claim your benefits. The maximum waiting periods are as follow:

- 12 months for pre-existing conditions
- 12 months for obstetrics (pregnancy)
- two months for psychiatric care, rehabilitation care
- two months for all other circumstances

During the waiting period, you don't receive any benefits for certain treatments or lower benefits. You should also take note of what is and isn't covered on your policy as not all policies are comprehensive. Depending on your coverage, you may not be fully covered against all costs associated with your treatment and will have to pay some out-of-pocket expenses.

Find out more at the [Australian Government's Private Insurance Ombudsman homepage](#)

Childcare

Australia guarantees 12 months of unpaid parental leave for any employee who gives birth or has a spouse give birth. The employee may also request an additional 12 months after the first, if they feel they want it. Only employees who have 1) worked for their employer for at least 12 months before the birth of the baby and 2) have or will have responsibility for the care of the child. Child care is offered subsidized or free by the government, depending on your financial situation. Find out more on child care information, locations of child care options and how much the government may subsidize [here](#).

Finding a Kindergarten

Australia offers universal access to universal learning for three to five-year olds. These pre-schools and kindergartens can be state-run or ran by local councils or community groups. Pre-school and kindergarten are non-compulsory, yet most parents still choose to give their kids at least one year of schooling before starting primary school.

More information on child care services, including Special Child Care Centers and Occasional Child Care Services [can be found here](#).

Education

The current structure of education in New South Wales is as follows:

- **Kindergarten:** Programs can begin at 3 years of age and continue for 2 years, or children can be enrolled at the age of 4 for a one year program before school starts.
- **Primary School:** Primary school consists of the years from Preparatory (Prep) to Year 6.
- **Secondary School:** This begins at Year 7 and finishes at the end of Year 12.

Excluding Kindergarten, most children living in New South Wales will complete at least 13 years of schooling, from Prep to Year 12. In order to start school in New South Wales (at the Prep year), a child must have turned 5 by April 30th of that year. Legally all children must be in school in the year they turn 6 and remain there until they turn 17 years of age.

Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary education is offered in two sectors - the vocational and technical education sector and the higher education sector.

- **Vocational and Technical Education (VET)** in Australia operates under a national training system which is industry-led, competency-based, nationally-consistent and quality assured.
- **Higher Education** is a nationally-consistent system offered by universities and other accredited higher education institutions. Higher education programs lead to the following qualifications:

Diplomas

- Advanced Diplomas and Associate Degrees
- Bachelor Degrees
- Graduate Certificates and Diplomas
- Master Degrees
- Doctoral Degrees

Several Sydney's private schools offer the International Baccalaureate program, though generally in the primary years and/or the final two years of schooling only. A handful of schools in the city offer the program beginning in the primary years and continuing the entire way to Year 12.

School Year Calendar

The school year in the southern hemisphere commences in late January and extends to mid-December. This difference means that children coming from a northern hemisphere system will need to either repeat part of a year they have completed or jump ahead to the middle of a year they haven't yet started. Decisions are generally made in liaison with school staff and based on age, assessment and history of the particular child.

Australia School Year*

Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	School Year	Level of Responsibility
Green	Red	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Blue	Blue	Blue	Grey	Green	200 Days	State

Key

Red	Green	Blue	Grey	Light Green	Yellow
Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Main Holiday	Other Holidays

In whichever school you enroll, English as a Second Language (ESL) support will be provided for your child. A minimum starting level of English is required. If the student's English level is not sufficient, the child will be placed in intensive English studies program before they start school.

Helpful Links:

[Better Education's top primary schools in Sydney 2015](#)

[Better Education's top high schools in Sydney 2015](#)

[Compare NSW Secondary Schools side by side tool](#)

BANKING & MONEY MATTERS

The Australian dollar is the currency of the Commonwealth of Australia. Australia was the first country in the world to have a complete system of bank notes made from plastic (polymer). These notes provide much greater security against counterfeiting. They also last four times as long as conventional paper (fibrous) notes. You can assume that whenever you see the dollar symbol (\$) it references the Australian dollar. Find the daily exchange rate [here](#).

International Banks

- [Bank of America](#)
- [Citibank](#)
- [Deutsche Bank](#)
- [HSBC](#)
- [You can find a longer list of international banks here](#)

Local Banks

- [AMP Bank Limited](#)
- [Australian Military Bank](#)
- [Bank West](#)
- [Commonwealth Bank of Australia](#)
- [Macquarie Bank](#)
- [P&N Bank](#)
- [St. George](#)
- [Westpac](#)

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION & DRIVING

Opal card

The Opal card provides instant electronic access to Sydney's public transport system. As a contactless smart debit card, it can be tapped onto a reader to transfer fare from the passenger to the carrier.

Simply load value onto your Opal Card online, in person or set up an automatic top-up. When you tap on at an Opal Card reader to start your journey, and tap off at the end of your journey, your fare is automatically calculated and deducted from the value stored on your Opal Card. Enjoy the benefits of daily travel caps and a \$2.50 Sunday cap. You can find more information [here](#).

One can use their Opal card to pay for transit on trains, buses, ferries and light rail. There is a rewards system that allows users to earn free trips through their usage and opal card users are charged a slightly lesser fee than non-opal card users.

By Bus

The open-topped, red double-decker buses that drive around the city streets are called [City Explorers](#). These are tour buses, but can still be rode by people whose stop is close to a tourist attraction. Buy a ticket and you can hop on and hop off at 34 different stops that include all the major Sydney attractions. Major bus thoroughfares in the city center are located on York Street, Pitt Street, Castlereagh Street and Elizabeth Street, and around Circular Quay and Sydney Central Station.

Buses in the city and major Sydney hubs are prepay only (cashless) between 7am and 7pm Monday to Friday, so you'll need to have your ticket or Opal card before you board. The [Metrobus](#) network (characterized by red buses) comprises 13 routes, providing high-frequency, high-capacity links across Sydney.

[Tripview](#) is a great public transport app you can use to find your way around Sydney. It presents real-time data provided by Transport for NSW, meaning you can see exactly how far away your bus, train or ferry is and when it is expected to arrive. For timetables and routes, including late night options, call 131 500 or go to the [Travel Website Info](#) and use the route planning tool.

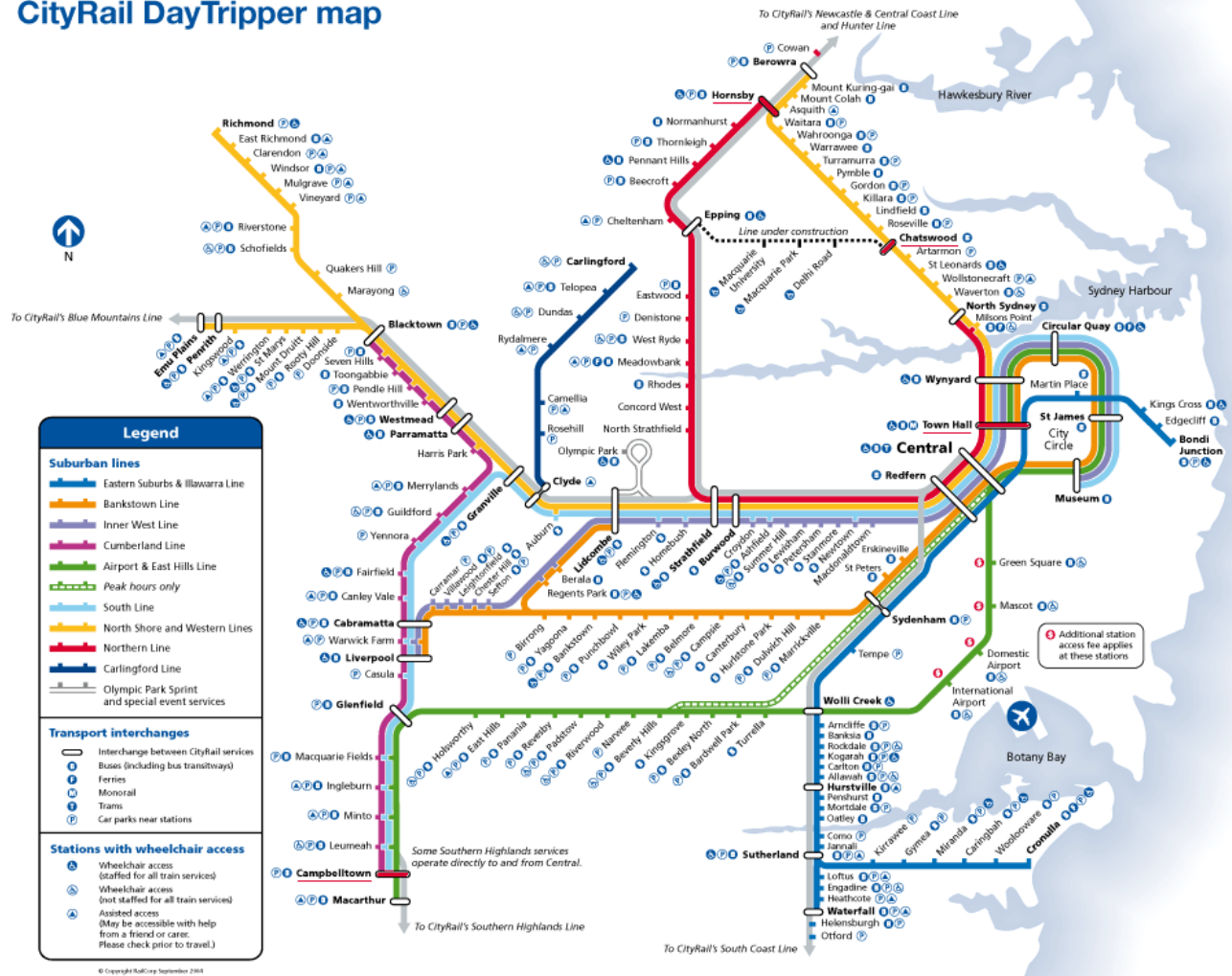
By Train

The Sydney train system is broken up into two parts: heavy and light rail trains. The heavy trains operate metropolitan train services with a network that connects the suburbs to the city proper. The network is made up of several easy-to-follow, color-coded lines. The main station for both the suburban and country rail services is Central Station. Most Sydney Trains services do not operate between midnight and 4:30am, however [NightRide](#) buses are offered between those hours.

Sydney Light Rail is the environmentally friendly way to travel between Central Station and the Inner West suburbs of Glebe, Rozelle, Lilyfield, Leichhardt and Dulwich Hill. This route also stops at popular destinations like Haymarket, Paddy's Market, Darling Harbor, The Star, and Sydney Fish Market. Due to

the variety of other public transport available and the smaller population density of the city center compared to other cities, Sydney does not have a subway or metro system.

CityRail DayTripper map



Source: monorailaustralia.com

By Ferry

Sydney Ferries transport commuters and visitors across the beautiful blue waterways that form the very heart of Sydney. Boarding a ferry is a fantastic way to explore and travel around one of the world's most beautiful harbor cities. Catch a regular service to Manly, Parramatta, Balmain, Watsons Bay, Sydney Olympic Park, Taronga Zoo and many other locations. If you're looking for a cruise on Sydney Harbor, head to Circular Quay or King Street Wharf on Darling Harbor where you'll find morning, afternoon and evening cruises available.



Source: Sydney Guide

By Taxi

Taxis are a convenient way to cover short to medium distances when you're travelling around Sydney. They can usually be flagged down along major roads, or you can find them at taxi ranks around the city center and suburban areas. Taxis are available for hire if the light on their roof is on. Taxis will charge extra if booked by phone, or, if you travel through a tollbooth such as on the Sydney Harbor Bridge.

A water taxi is a memorable way to get from A to B around Sydney Harbor. Water taxis can land at Jetties around the harbor so book one for a special night out at a harbor side restaurant

Most taxi drivers accept payment by credit card. Tipping is not required or expected, but rounding up a taxi fare to the next dollar is common.

[Uber](#) (on demand cab service through Smart Phone application) is also available in the city of Sydney

By Car

Drivers in Australia require a valid driver's license. You can drive with a foreign (English language) license for three months. Longer than that, you need to get a license from an Australian state. If your license is not in English, you need to get an International Driving Permit from the Automobile Association in your home country before coming to Australia. Find out more about licensing rules [here](#).

Speed limits are clearly signposted. A default 50km/h speed limit applies in urban areas with street lights in the rare event that there is no other posted limit. Signposted school zones have a 40km/h limit during certain school hours. Speed cameras are used in all states and territories of Australia, with some states using hidden cameras, others preferring obviously placed ones.

Seat belts must be worn by all occupants. Children and babies must be restrained in an approved safety harnesses, capsules or booster seat, in some states up to 7 years old. Seat belt laws are strictly enforced, and the onus is on the driver to ensure all passengers are buckled up. Passengers 16 and over not wearing a seat belt will be fined along with the driver if caught.

In addition to seat belts, car seat laws are a tad different in Australia. Australia is one of the last developed countries to adopt the ISOFIX design car seat, that has become the standard in the US and Europe. The law has just recently been amended to allow parents to use ISOFIX car seats, but Australian authorities require them to also be fitted with a top "tether" strap. Read more about the ISOFIX car seat laws [here](#).

The blood alcohol limit is 0.05% throughout Australia, with zero limits for learners and drivers with provisional licenses ("P" plates) in some states. Random alcohol and drug tests are conducted by the police. If caught driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, a first offender might expect a fine and a period of driving suspension.

It is illegal to turn left on a red traffic signal unless signposted. In some states it is illegal to do a U-turn at a traffic signal unless otherwise signed.

By Plane

[Sydney \(Kingsford Smith\) International Airport](#) is the main port for visitors to Sydney by air. Sydney Airport is both the longest continuously operated commercial airport and oldest commercial international airport in the world, the world's oldest continually operating commercial airport, and the busiest airport in Australia. Currently 46 domestic and 43 international destinations are served to Sydney directly.

The local, state and federal governments have investigated the viability of building a second major airport in Sydney since the 1940s. Between 1987 and 2000, domestic travelers through Sydney more than doubled to nearly 27 million, and international passengers served increased from 8 million to 15 million. The Sydney region passenger demand is forecast to reach 87 million passengers by 2035. The Federal Government has bought most of the required land in a proposed site at Badgerys Creek, west of Sydney.

[You can read more about Sydney's transportation services here](#)

LOCAL REGISTRATIONS & DRIVER'S LICENSE

Visas

Before your arrival into Sydney, you will need to secure an Australian visa. There are many different types of visas that allow you to do different things. There are varying visas for if your stay is permanent or temporary, whether you will work or not, or if you are bringing a spouse or kids. Use the Australian Government's [Visa Finder](#) to discover which visa is most appropriate for your situation.

You should collect and scan the following documents prior to departure so that you can have them on file for future licensing processes:

- Birth certificates
- Marriage/Divorce papers
- Job and employment references
- Life and other insurance documents
- School qualifications
- Letters from banks where you have had loans to verify credit record
- Full records of any trusts or companies you will operate while abroad
- Child's school, immunizations, academic records

Driver's License

Driver's Licenses will need to be obtained within 3 months of taking up residence in an Australian state. If you're coming from America, Canada, Japan or Europe, you will most likely not need to take a practical test to obtain your license. The rules and regulations for driving vary by state. In New South Wales, the minimum driving age is 16 years old.

With Australia having no national identity card in operation, your driver's license will serve as your primary means of photo identification. You will need to be able to show photo identification to purchase alcohol and tobacco, apply for loans, etc.

Remember that traffic and licensing rules vary state to state if you will be travelling throughout Australia. The speed limits in NSW will be different from those in other parts of the country. If travelling interstate, be sure to be aware of posted signs that will alert you to the varying traffic regulations.

You can find the application for a NSW Driver's License online [here](#).

SHOPPING

Tipping

The general rule in Australia is that tipping is not required. No service workers in Australia expect you to tip; they are all paid minimum wages that are not supported by tips. There is no need to tip in restaurants, taxis hotels or bars, but of course if you feel inclined because the service was spectacular, no one will refuse free money.

Moderate Sales Tax

Introduced in 2000, the goods and service tax is a 10% value add on to most goods and services sales in Australia. However, in contrast to America the advertised price includes tax so you should never pay more than the price shown.

Credit and Debit Cards

Most shops will accept debit and credit cards. There are also plenty of available ATM machines to withdraw money from. Most ATM's will be compatible with international cards, but there will most likely be a fee for doing so. Be aware that ATM's in Australia usually only dispose a mix of \$20 and \$50 notes, so you can only withdraw multiples of these.

Shopping Malls

- [The Strand Arcade](#) – Houses Australia's best designer labels, jewelers, and unique gift shops.
- [Queen Victoria Building](#) – Occupies an entire block on George St., and its mighty center dome draws Australians and tourists alike during Christmas as a giant Christmas tree is housed within.
- [Pitt Street Mall](#) – PSM is located in the heart of Sydney CBD and is Australia's busiest and most cosmopolitan shopping precinct.
- [Westfield Sydney](#) – Offering a mix of top Australian designers and international high street fashion across four levels, with a further three levels of dining, Westfield Sydney is the ultimate shopping and dining destination.
- [The Galleries](#) – The Galleries is a lifestyle and cultural destination for fashion, art and dining. Discover the diverse mix of stores located in the heart of the city including favorites Muji, Incu, and Carhartt.

Street Markets

Street markets are common in Sydney, usually selling organic produce, artisan crafts and locally made goods.

- [Paddington Market](#) – Is a community based market supporting local people passionate about their craft. Buying a product here not only supports local and emerging designers, but also contributes to providing a warm meal and support for Sydney's homeless through the Eddie Dixon Centre.



Source: [travel live learn](#)

- [Bondi Markets](#) – Are open every Sunday in the wonderful, beachfront grounds of Bondi Beach Public School. Head to the markets and you'll find original designer clothing, exotic imports, handmade jewelry, arts, crafts, homewares, retro furniture and vintage clothes.
- [The Rocks Markets](#) – Open every Saturday and Sunday selling jewelry, original art works and prints in the warm sun.
- [Paddy's Markets](#) – Not to be confused with Paddington Markets, Paddy's has held a central place in Sydney's history for 150 years. Sydney's biggest collection of markets has a wide variety of stalls including food, fashion and gadgets in a true market atmosphere. Close to Chinatown.
- [Finders Keepers](#) – Is a bi-annual, free event held at CarriageWorks that showcases the best in local contemporary art and design. Imagine a giant flea market of creations that would be sold on ETSY.
- [Rozelle Markets](#) – Is the epitome of second-hand and vintage fashion shopping. Not many markets have stayed true to the flea-market tradition and style, but that's what gives Rozelle Markets its charm and popularity.

Supermarkets and Convenience Stores

There is an abundance of convenience stores and supermarkets to be found in Sydney. These include [7-Eleven](#), SPAR Express and [NewsLink](#). Convenience stores are typically open 24-7 and sell a wide variety of snacks and household products. There are a number of supermarket chains that have branches in nearly every neighborhood. They include: Flemings, [Woolworths](#), [Safeway](#), [Aldi](#), [Coles](#) and Foodworks. These supermarkets offer fresher and larger selections of produce than the convenience stores.

Imported and Ethnic Food Areas of Sydney

A number of Sydney's suburbs are known for housing wonderfully, authentic ethnic food usually prepared by immigrants from those countries. Ashfield is known for its dumplings, both shanghai and Polish-style. Auburn brings tastes from the Middle East with a number of Turkish and Persian restaurants. Cabramatta boasts a plethora of Vietnamese food and bustling fruit markets. Hurtsville's Forest Road houses a "United Nations" of restaurants and bakeries. Find more ethnic food hubs of Sydney [here](#).



Source: [Terra Galleries](#)

Festivals

- [Flickerfest Film Festival](#)
- [Sydney Festival](#)
- [Chinese New Year](#)
- [National Multicultural Festival](#)
- [Sydney Mardi Gras](#)
- [Thirroul Seaside and Arts Festival](#)
- [Sydney Writers' Festival](#)
- [Merimbula Jazz Festival](#)
- [Big Day Out](#)
- [Bathurst 1000](#)
- [Santa Fest](#)



[Big Day Out](#)

Beaches

Beaches hold a special place in Australian's natural identity. Being the island country that it is, the beach is far from foreign to Australians. You are never far away from a beach in Sydney; beaches stretch all along Sydney's eastern coast. There are absolutely no private beaches in Sydney as every beach is open to any and everyone. All public beaches have lifeguards on duty that have trained with the Australian Lifeguard Service, but even with their oversight watch out for the undertow!

The best beaches include:

- [Bondi Beach](#) – Easily the most famous of Australia's beaches, Bondi is always packed with people, swimming relaxing and surfing. There are on-site surfing schools to help beginners get started and for pros to hone their skills. Beyond the beach are a multitude of dining and nightlife options.
- [Manly Beach](#) – Manly is a combination between an inner-harbor and surf beach. There are a number of tours that set off from Manly beach including Cove biking tours, snorkeling tours and tours of the local wharfs.
- [Freshwater Beach](#)– Freshwater beach is just a short walk north of Manly. Freshwater is also listed on the National Surfing Reserve as surf legend Hawaiian "Duke" Kahanamoku carved a board from a piece of timber and demonstrated surfing for the locals in 1915. The beach also features an 8 lane, 50 meter saltwater pool.
- [Tamara Beach](#) – Located in between Bondi and Coogee, Tamara has less of the bustle of Bondi but retains all the beauty. Tamaram is colloquially referred to as "Glamarama" because it's where all the beautiful people hang out.

Please go [here](#) for more information on beaches in Sydney.

Hiking and Camping

There are several trails in and around Sydney:

- [Bondi to Coogee Coastal Walk](#)– 6 km of picturesque coastal paths.
- [The Federation Cliff Walk](#) – 5 km clifftop walk with views of the Pacific Ocean.
- [Manly to Spit Bridge](#) – This 10 km walk weaves through both bushland and harbor side trails.
- [Manly Scenic Walkway](#) – The best way to get to Manly is by foot, not bus!
- [The Coast Track](#) – 26 km trail that begins in Bundeena and ends at Wattamolla. The walk is best completed over two days, but those with adventure in their heart can make the trek in one day.



[Manly to Spit Bridge](#)

Museums

There are a variety of museums in Sydney spanning all subject matters:

- [Australian Museum](#) – Get up close and personal with the nation’s most important animal, mineral, fossil and anthropological collections.
- [Australian National Maritime Museum](#) – With Sydney surrounded by water, there is no surprise that this museum is one of the finest when it comes to marine treasures. The museum’s collection includes defense ships like the HMAS Onslow to the 1874 tall ship James Craig.
- [Museum of Sydney](#) – Standing on the site of the first Government House built in Sydney, this museum showcases everything that makes Sydney special.
- [Hyde Park Barracks Museum](#) – With Australia starting out as a penial colony, it is only fitting to pay homage to that background with a museum that highlights Australia’s antiquated prison system.
- [Powerhouse Museum](#) – This former power station, converted into a museum in 1988, is the flagship venue of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.

More information on Museums in Sydney can be found [here](#).

INTERNATIONAL GROUPS/CLUBS

Expatriate Resources

- [Sydney Expatriate Network](#)
- [Sydney Expat Connection on Meetup.com](#)
- [International Friends on Meetup.com](#)
- [Sydney International Group Facebook Page](#)

HOLIDAYS

Holiday 2016	Date	Day of Week
New Year's Day	1 January	Friday
Australia Day	26 January	Tuesday
St. Valentine's Day	14 February	Sunday
Good Friday	25 March	Friday
Easter Saturday	26 March	Saturday
Easter Sunday	27 March	Sunday
Easter Monday	28 March	Monday
ANZAC Day	25 April	Monday
Mother's Day	8 May	Sunday
Queen's Birthday	13 June	Monday
Father's Day	4 September	Sunday
Labour Day	3 October	Monday
Christmas Day	25 December	Sunday
Boxing Day	26 December	Monday
Christmas Day (in lieu)	27 December	Tuesday

[Source Office Holidays](#)

Public Holidays

Australia has two types of public holidays: national and local. National public holidays including New Year's Day, Australia Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, ANZAC Day, Christmas Day and Boxing Day, will mean that most businesses and government services will be closed on those days. Local holidays vary from state to state and business closures are rarer.

Working week: Monday to Saturday

Most local and international companies' employees work five days per week. However, most shops, museums, and cinemas are open on Saturday and Sunday. Commercial establishments including consumer banking and consumer telecommunication branches are generally open throughout the weekend and on most public holidays.