

Directory

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ACCOMMODATION

The East Coast is a well-trodden route with plenty of accommodation options to suit all budgets. Endowed with Australia's largest cities and most famous holiday resorts, the coast boasts abundant motels, guesthouses, B&Bs, hostels, pubs and caravan parks with camp sites. There are also lots of less conventional possibilities such as farm-stays, houseboats and yachts.

The listings in this guidebook are ordered from budget to midrange to top end, with the cheapest options within each category listed first. Any place that charges up to \$100 per room has been categorised as budget accommodation. Midrange prices are from \$100 to \$160 per room, while the top-end tag is applied to places charging more than \$160

PRACTICALITIES

- Plugs have angled pins; voltage is 220V to 240V, 50Hz.
- Broadsheet dailies include the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Melbourne's *Age* and the national *Australian*.
- The metric system is used for weights and measures.
- Free-to-air TV is provided by the government-sponsored Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and multicultural SBS, and three commercial stations, namely Seven, Nine and Ten.
- Video players use the PAL system.
- Most interior spaces in the ACT, NSW, Queensland and Victoria are nonsmoking.

per room. As Sydney is a more expensive destination, our price ranges for it differ slightly, with budget stretching to \$120 a double and midrange places going up to \$180 a room.

In many regions prices don't vary dramatically from season to season, and we have simply listed the prices that are charged for the majority of the year. In other areas there are dramatic seasonal price variations; in these cases we have listed high-season prices but not the short peak season around Christmas, when many coastal resorts have a short-lived price spike in the middle of the high season. Along the southeastern coast, the summer months (December to February) are high season, particularly the school holidays that begin just before Christmas. The southern winter coincides with the mild northern dry season, and the northern migration (particularly during school holidays) keeps prices high in the north.

B&Bs

In country areas, guesthouses and B&Bs are the fastest-growing segment of the accommodation market. New places are opening all the time, and the options include everything from a room in a restored Victorian-era mansion or a rambling Queenslander to a contemporary purpose-built cottage.

FAVOURITE CAMP SITES

Here's some favourite camp sites of this book's authors:

- Cape Conran Coastal Park, Gippsland, Victoria (p135)
- Murrumbidgee National Park, South Coast NSW (p163)
- Myall Lakes National Park, Central Coast NSW (p238)
- Bundjalung National Park, North Coast NSW (p267)
- Fraser Island Beach, Fraser Coast, Queensland (p377)
- Dunk Island, North Queensland (p444)
- Frankland and Fitzroy Islands, Far North Queensland (p460 and p460)

Tariffs cover a wide price range. They're typically in the \$80 to \$150 (per double) bracket, but can be much higher in areas that attract weekend getaways and romantic escapes from the cities.

Local tourist offices usually have a list of places.

Online resources:

Australian B&B (www.australianbandb.com.au)

Bed & Breakfast (www.babs.com.au)

OZ Bed and Breakfast (www.ozbedandbreakfast.com)

Camping

If you want to explore the East Coast on a shoestring, camping is the way to go. Camping in national parks can cost from nothing to a \$14 per person – nights spent around a campfire under the stars are unforgettable. Tent sites at private camping and caravan parks cost around \$12 to \$30 per couple per night, and a few dollars more with electricity.

National parks and their camping areas are administered by each state. Contact details include:

New South Wales www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

Queensland www.epa.qld.gov.au/parks_and_forests

Victoria www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

When it comes to urban camping, remember that most city caravan parks are a long way from the centre of town. Most caravan parks are good value, with almost all of them equipped with hot showers, toilets and laundry

facilities, and usually a pool. Many have on-site cabins. The size of these cabins and the facilities offered vary but expect to pay \$50 to \$90 for two people in a cabin with a kitchenette – about the same as a cheap motel. If you intend to do a lot of caravanning or camping, it's not a bad idea to join one of the major chains such as **Big 4 Holiday Parks** (☎ 03-9421 0100, 1800 632 444; www.big4.com.au). It gives you discounts on accommodation at member parks as well as various other tourist discounts.

Note that all camping and cabin rates quoted throughout this guide are for two people.

Farm-stays

Many coastal and hinterland farms offer a bed for the night and the chance to see rural Australia at work. At some you sit back and watch other people raise a sweat, while others like to get you involved in day-to-day activities. Check out the options on the website for **Australian Farmhost Holidays** (www.australiafarmhost.com). For travellers who don't mind getting their hands dirty, there's **Willing Workers on Organic Farms** (WWOOF; ☎ 03-5155 0218; www.wwoof.com.au). Regional and town tourist offices should also be able to tell you what's available in their area.

Hostels

Hostels or 'backpackers' are a highly social, low-cost fixture of the East Coast accommodation scene. There is a staggering number, ranging from family-run places in converted houses to huge, custom-built resorts replete with bars, nightclubs and a party attitude. Standards range from outstanding to awful, and management from friendly to scary.

Dorm beds typically cost \$20 to \$30, with single rooms hovering around \$50 and doubles costing \$60 to \$90.

Useful organisations:

Nomads Backpackers (☎ 02-9299 7710; www.nomadsworld.com) Membership (\$39 for 12 months) entitles you to numerous discounts.

VIP Backpacker Resorts (☎ 07-3395 6052; www.vipbackpackers.com) Membership (\$43 for 12 months) entitles you to various discounts.

YHA (☎ 02-9261 1111; www.yha.com.au) Membership (from \$32 for 12 months) entitles you to discounts at YHA and many independent hostels.

A warning for Australian and Kiwi travellers: some hostels will only admit overseas back-

FAVOURITE ACCOMMODATION

Here's some of the author's favourite places to stay:

- Karbeethong Lodge on Victoria's Southeast Coast (p138)
- A Pearl Beach apartment north of Sydney (p224)
- A Wooli beach apartment on NSW's North Coast (p263)
- Allender Apartments in Brisbane (p321)
- Surfside Motel in Yeppoon on Queensland's Capricorn Coast (p392)
- Bungalow Bay YHA on Magnetic Island, North Coast Queensland (p433)
- Lizard Island Resort off the Far North Coast of Queensland (p477)

packers, mainly because they've had problems with locals sleeping over and bothering the backpackers. Fortunately it's only a rowdy minority that makes trouble, and often hostels will only ask for identification in order to deter potential troublemakers.

Hotels & Motels

Hotels in cities or places visited by lots of tourists are generally of the business or luxury variety where you get a comfortable, anonymous and mod-con-filled room. These places tend to have a pool, a restaurant or café, room service and other facilities. We quote 'rack rates' (official advertised rates) throughout this book, but often hotels will offer regular discounts and special deals.

For comfortable midrange accommodation, motels (or motor inns) are a reliable option. Almost every country town has at least one, and the larger towns have many. Prices vary, and there's rarely a cheaper rate for singles, so they tend to be better for couples. Most motels have similar features (tea- and coffee-making facilities, fridges, TVs, air-con, bathrooms) but the price will indicate the standard. You'll mostly pay between \$50 and \$120 for a room.

The travel booking websites useful for finding airfares (p495) are usually also good for rooms. The following are room-specific and often have excellent deals:

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

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

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

Pubs

For the budget traveller, rooms in pubs (more formally known as public houses) aka hotels, aka 'the local', can be a good option. In the cities they are less attractive, and the rooms are either noisy or run down or both. In the country, however, pubs usually make for a convenient and often interesting choice. In tourist areas some of these pubs have been restored as they are often in outstanding heritage buildings, but generally the rooms remain small and old-fashioned, with a long amble down the hall to the bathroom. Never book a room above the bar if you're a light sleeper.

Pubs usually have single/double/twin rooms with shared facilities from around \$35/60/60, obviously more if you want a private bathroom. The website www.pubstay.com.au lists an array of the better places.

Rental Accommodation

Rental accommodation is found in the form of holiday flats (in tourist areas) and serviced apartments (in cities). A holiday flat is much like a motel unit but has a serviceable kitchen. Holiday flats are often rented on a weekly basis; expect to pay anywhere from \$80 to \$140 per night for a one-bedroom flat. Ask a local real-estate agent about holiday rentals.

If you want to stay for a longer period, the first place to look for a shared flat or a room in the cities is the classified-advertisements sections of daily newspapers. Wednesday and Saturday are the best days for these ads. Notice boards at universities, hostels and cafés are also good places to look for flats and houses to share or rooms to rent.

Useful websites:

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

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

BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels. 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.

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

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

Keep in mind that some long-term lodgings require deposits (or bonds) and don't come furnished.

ACTIVITIES

See the East Coast Australia Outdoors chapter, p63.

BUSINESS HOURS

Most shops and businesses open at 9am and close at 5pm or 5.30pm weekdays, and at either noon or 5pm on Saturday. Sunday trading is becoming increasingly common, but it's mostly limited to the larger cities or main tourist towns. In most towns there are usually one or two late shopping nights each week, when the doors stay open until 9pm or 9.30pm. Usually it's Thursday and/or Friday night. Supermarkets are generally open till 8pm and sometimes for 24 hours in cities. You may also find milk bars (general stores) and convenience stores that open late. In tourist resort areas (eg Cairns and the Gold Coast) shops may stay open later and all day on Saturday. Conversely, many small towns – even those that subsist on tourists – may be locked up so tight by 10pm that you can't even buy a chocolate bar.

Banks are generally open from 9.30am to 4pm Monday to Thursday, and until 5pm on Friday. Post offices open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

Restaurants typically open at noon for lunch and 6pm for dinner. Restaurants stay open until at least 9pm, but tend to serve food much later on Friday and Saturday nights. Cafés tend to be all-day affairs, opening at 7am and closing around 5pm, unless they simply continue their business into the night. Pubs usually serve food from noon to 2pm and from 6pm to 8pm. Pubs and bars often open 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 its nappy (dia-

per); check with the local tourist office or city council for details. While many Australians have a relaxed attitude about breast-feeding or nappy changing in public, others frown upon it.

In Victoria it is illegal for anyone to discriminate against someone breast-feeding in public.

Most motels and better-equipped caravan parks supply cots and baby's baths; many also have playgrounds, swimming pools and in-house videos for children, as well as child-minding services. Many B&Bs, on the other hand, market themselves as sanctuaries from all things child-related.

If you want to leave Junior behind for a few hours, licensed childcare agencies have places set aside for casual care, or many of the larger hotels have contacts. Licensed centres are subject to government regulation and usually have a high standard; visitors centres can also often help you find childcare.

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. However, the definition of 'child' can vary from under 12 to under 18 years.

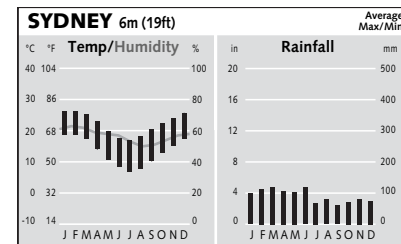
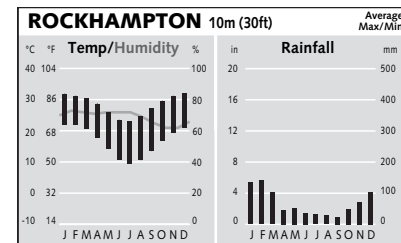
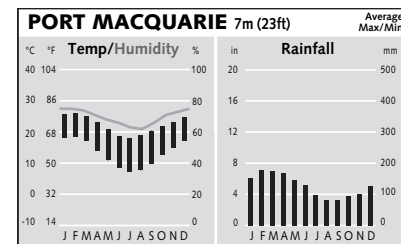
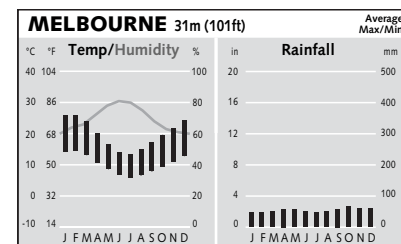
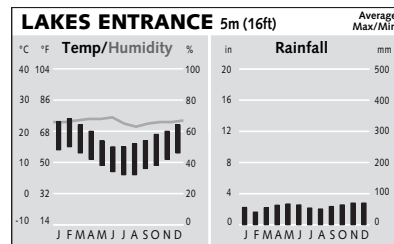
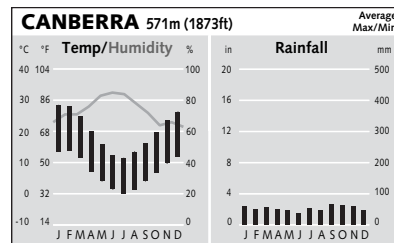
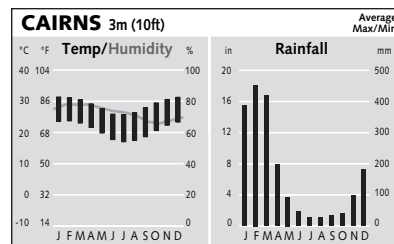
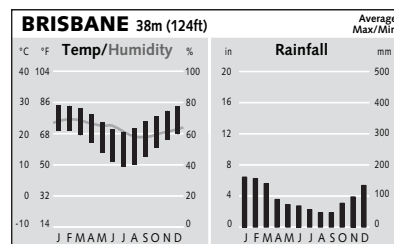
Medical services and facilities in Australia are of a high standard, and items such as baby food, formula and disposable nappies are widely available in urban centres. Major car-hire companies will supply and fit booster seats for you.

Sights & Activities

There's plenty to keep kids occupied along the East Coast. Theme parks such as Sea World and Movie World on the Gold Coast are popular, but there are many cheaper and free options as well. Websites www.sydneyschild.com.au and www.melbournschild.com.au have useful information.

CLIMATE

Australia's size means there's a lot of climatic variation along the entire East Coast, but without severe extremes. From Melbourne to Sydney the coast has cold (though generally not freezing), wet winters (June to August). Summers (December to February) are pleasant and warm, sometimes quite hot and usually dry. Violent electrical storms and sudden downpours are likely culminations



to a period of hot summer weather along the coast. Spring (September to November) and autumn (March to May) are transition months, much the same as in Europe and North America.

As you head north of Sydney and into the subtropics, seasonal variation becomes less dramatic. In Far North Queensland, however, you enter the monsoon belt of the tropics where there are two seasons: hot and very

wet (ie the wet season), and hot and dry (the dry season).

See p23 for more information on Australia's East Coast seasons.

CUSTOMS

When entering Australia you can bring most articles in free of duty provided that customs is satisfied they are for personal use and you'll be taking them with you when you leave.

UNEXPECTED OUTDOOR HAZARDS

More bushwalkers 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. Exposure in even moderately cool temperatures can sometimes result in **hypothermia**; for more information on hypothermia and how to minimise its risk, see p509.

And although you will hear this often, it bears regular repeating: use plenty of sunscreen and wear a hat. The Australian sun can be very strong, especially as you go north. Don't let a nasty **sunburn** ruin your holiday or cause long-term damage.

There's a duty-free quota of 2.25L of alcohol, 250 cigarettes and dutiable goods up to the value of \$900 per person. For comprehensive information on customs regulations, contact the **Australian Customs Service** (ACS; ☎ 02-6275 6666, 1300 363 263; www.customs.gov.au).

You will be asked to declare all food, plant and animal material – wooden spoons, straw hats, the lot – and show them to an official. The authorities are naturally keen to prevent weeds, pests or diseases getting into the country – Australia has so far managed to escape many of the agricultural pests and diseases prevalent in other parts of the world. Due to local pests and diseases, there are also restrictions on taking fruit and vegetables between states (see the boxed text, p499). If you have any doubts about what you can bring into Australia, ring the closest Australian embassy or check the government's customs information under the ACS website. For further information on quarantine regulations contact the **Australian Quarantine & Inspection Service** (AQIS; www.aqis.gov.au).

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Generally Australia is a safe place to travel. With simple precautions, you should have no worries.

Animal Hazards

Australia is often marvelled at for its profusion of dangerous creatures. Nothing strikes fear into the hearts of visiting campers and hikers more than stories of spiders in sleeping bags and snakes on walking trails. Australia has also had its share of shark and crocodile attacks. Of course, unless you go looking for

these creatures, you'll probably never see one, let alone be attacked by one. Hospitals have antivenin on hand for all common snake and spider bites, but it helps to know what it was that bit you.

MARINE STINGERS

The Chironex box and the Irukandji jellyfish, also known as sea wasps or 'stingers', are found north of Agnes Water on Queensland's coast. For information on these potentially fatal hazards see the boxed text, p381.

CROCODILES

Commonly known as 'salties', saltwater (or estuarine) crocodiles are a real danger up north – they have been known to sample humans. As well as living around the coast they are found in estuaries, creeks and rivers, sometimes a long way inland. Observe safety signs or ask locals whether an inviting waterhole or river is croc-free before plunging in.

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 mozzie (mosquito).

In the cities the flies aren't too bad; it's in the bush they start getting out of hand. The humble fly net, which fits on a hat, is very effective even if it looks ridiculous. Repellents may help to deter the little bastards but don't count on it.

Mozzies can be a problem in summer, especially near wetlands in tropical areas – some species are carriers of viral infections (see p509). You need to keep arms and legs covered as soon as the sun goes down and make liberal use of insect repellent that contains DEET.

SNAKES

There are many venomous snakes but few are aggressive – unless you're interfering with one, or have the misfortune to stand on one, it's unlikely that you'll be bitten. The most common venomous snakes in Australia are the brown and tiger snakes. The golden rule is 'if you see a snake leave it alone'. Don't try to catch or kill it. See p508 for information on treating snake bites.

SPIDERS

Nasty spiders include the funnel-web, the red-back and the white-tailed spider. The deadly

funnel-web spider is found in NSW (including Sydney) and its bite is treated in the same way as snake bite. The redback spider is black with a distinctive red stripe on its body; for bites, apply ice and seek medical attention. The white-tailed is a long, thin black spider with, you guessed it, a white tail, and has a nasty bite that can lead to local inflammation and ulceration. The large and frightening huntsman spider, which often enters homes, is harmless.

Bushfires

Bushfires happen every year along the East Coast, especially as some areas suffer ongoing drought. In hot, dry and windy weather, be extremely careful with any flame – cigarette butts thrown out of the windows of cars have started many a fire. On a total fire ban day it is forbidden even to use a camping stove. The locals won't be amused if they catch you; they'll happily dob you in, and the penalties are severe.

Take local advice before setting out on a bushwalk. On a day of total fire ban, don't go; delay your trip until the weather has changed. If you're out in the bush and you see smoke, even a long way away, take it seriously. Go to the nearest open space, downhill if possible. A forested ridge is the most dangerous place to be. Bushfires move very quickly and change direction with the wind.

Crime

Don't leave hotel rooms or cars unlocked, and don't leave your valuables unattended or visible through a car window. Sydney, the Gold Coast, Cairns and Byron Bay all get a dishonourable mention when it comes to theft, so keep a careful eye on your belongings in these areas. Make use of lockers or hotel safes.

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

Driving

Australian drivers are generally fairly courteous, but there are some particular dangers on the open road in rural areas. See p501 for more information.

Swimming

Be aware that many surf beaches can be dangerous places to swim if you are not used to the conditions. Rips (undertows) are the main problem, and a number of people are paralysed each year by diving into waves in shallow water and hitting a sand bar – check first.

Many beaches are patrolled by surf lifesavers, and patrolled areas are marked off by flags. 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.

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. In most cases the current stops within a couple of hundred metres of the shore; swim parallel to the shore for a short way to get out of the rip and then make your way to shore.

Getting Around

The international wheelchair symbol (blue on a white background) for parking in allocated bays is recognised. Maps of central business districts showing accessible routes, toilets etc are available from major city councils, some regional councils and at information centres.

Most of the taxi companies in major cities and towns have modified vehicles to accommodate wheelchairs. 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.

DISCOUNT CARDS

Senior Cards

Australian 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 and bus passes 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 off regular air fares.

Student & Youth Cards

Carrying a student card entitles you to a wide variety of discounts throughout Australia. The most common card is the International Student Identity Card (ISIC), which is issued to

full-time students aged 12 years and over, and gives the bearer discounts on accommodation, transport and admission to some attractions. It's available from student unions, hosting organisations and some travel agencies; for more information, see the website of the **International Student Travel Confederation** (ISTC; www.istc.org).

The ISTC is also the body behind the International Youth Travel Card (IYTC or Go25), which is issued to people between 12 and 26 years of age who are not full-time students, and gives equivalent benefits to the ISIC. A similar ISTC brainchild is the International Teacher Identity Card (ITIC), available to teaching professionals.

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.

Embassies & Consulates in Australia

The principal diplomatic representations to Australia are in Canberra. There are also representatives of some countries in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney; look in the *Yellow Pages* directory for a complete listing.

Canada (Canberra (Map p158; ☎ 02-6270 4000; <http://geo.international.gc.ca/asia/australia/>); Commonwealth Ave, Canberra, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp186-7; ☎ 02-9364 3000; Level 5, 111 Harrington St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

France (Canberra (Map p158; ☎ 02-6216 0100; www.ambafrance-au.org); 6 Perth Ave, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp186-7; ☎ 02-9261 5779; www.consulfrance-sydney.org); Level 26, St Martins Tower, 31 Market St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

Germany (Canberra (Map p158; ☎ 02-6270 1911; www.germanembassy.org.au); 119 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp182-3; ☎ 02-9328 7733; 13 Trelawney St, Woollahra, NSW 2025); Melbourne (Map pp76-7; ☎ 03-9864 6888; 480 Punt Rd, South Yarra, Vic 3141)

Ireland (Canberra (Map p158; ☎ 02-6273 3022; irishemb@cyberone.com.au); 20 Arkana St, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp186-7; ☎ 02-9231 6999; Level 30, 400 George St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

Japan (Canberra (Map p158; ☎ 02-6273 3244; www.japan.org.au); 112 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp186-7; ☎ 02-9231 3455; Level 34, Colonial Centre, 52 Martin Pl, Sydney, NSW 2000)

Netherlands (Canberra (Map p158; ☎ 02-6220 9400; www.netherlands.org.au); 120 Empire Circuit, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp182-3; ☎ 02-9387 6644; Level 23, Tower 2, 101 Grafton St, Bondi Junction, NSW 2022)

New Zealand (www.nzembassy.com/australia) (Canberra (Map p158; ☎ 02-6270 4211; Commonwealth Ave,

Canberra, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp186-7; ☎ 02-8256 2000; Level 10, 55 Hunter St, Sydney, NSW 2001)

Singapore (Map p158; ☎ 02-6271 2000; www.mfa.gov.sg/canberra; 17 Forster Cres, Yarralumla, ACT 2600)

South Africa (Map p158; ☎ 02-6272 7300; www.sahc.org.au; cnr Rhodes Pl & State Circle, Yarralumla, Canberra, ACT 2600)

UK (Canberra (Map p158; ☎ 02-6270 6666; www.britaus.net); Commonwealth Ave, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp186-7; ☎ 02-9247 7521; 16th fl, 1 Macquarie Pl, Sydney, NSW 2000); Melbourne (Map pp78-9; ☎ 03-9652 1600; 11th fl, 90 Collins St, Melbourne, Vic 3000)

USA (Canberra (Map p158; ☎ 02-6214 5600; <http://usembassy-australia.state.gov>); 21 Moonah Pl, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney (Map pp186-7; ☎ 02-9373 9200; Level 59, 19-29 Martin Pl, Sydney, NSW 2000); Melbourne (Map p92; ☎ 03-9526 5900; Level 6, 553 St Kilda Rd, Melbourne, Vic 3004)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Some of the most enjoyable festivals are also the most typically Australian, such as surf life-saving competitions on beaches during summer. There are also some big city-based street festivals, sporting events, and arts festivals that showcase comedy, music and dance.

The following is a snapshot of some of the many festivals and special events held along the East Coast during the year. Tourist offices should be able to give precise dates of these and other events.

January

Midsumma (www.midsumma.org.au) Melbourne's gay, lesbian and transgender festival runs through January and February, starts with a street party, includes the famous Red Raw dance party and ends with the Midsumma Carnival in early February.

Big Day Out (www.bigdayout.com) This huge open-air music concert tours Sydney, Melbourne and the Gold Coast (as well as Adelaide and Perth), stopping over for one day in each city. It attracts big-name international acts and dozens of local bands.

Australian Open Tennis Championships (www.australianopen.com) Melbourne, late January (see p90).

February

Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras (www.mardigras.org.au) One of Australia's biggest and wildest festivals, the month-long Mardi Gras has an amazing street parade down Oxford St and a riotous Mardi Gras party.

March/April

Australia Formula One Grand Prix (www.grandprix.com.au) Melbourne reels in early March to the roar of engines and the smell of exhaust.

East Coast Blues and Roots Festival (www.bluesfest.com.au) There's an explosion of music over the Easter long weekend when artists from all over the world set up camp in lovely Byron Bay.

Melbourne International Comedy Festival (www.comedyfestival.com.au) Just over three weeks of laughs can be had at one of the largest comedy festivals in the world.

May

Nimbin Mardi Grass The alternative community of Nimbin swells for this mother-of-all-hippy-festivals – pitch a tent and chill out, man.

Wintermoon Festival (www.wintermoonfestival.com) Held 70km north of Mackay each year around May/June, this festival is a great opportunity to hear local and interstate musicians strut their stuff.

Sorry Day (www.journeyofhealing.com) On 26 May each year, the anniversary of the tabling in 1997 of the *Bringing Them Home* report, Australians acknowledge the continuing pain and suffering of indigenous Australians affected by Australia's one-time child-removal practices and policies.

June

Cooktown Discovery Festival Commemorating Captain Cook's landing in 1770, this knees-up is held over the Queen's Birthday weekend.

July

Queensland Music Festival (www.queenslandmusicfestival.com.au) Originally known as the Brisbane Festival of Music. Held biennially (odd-numbered years), this festival features Australian and international musicians and styles: jazz, rock, indigenous, classical and world music.

August

Hervey Bay Whale Festival (www.herveybaywhalefestival.com.au) Held over a fortnight, this festival celebrates the return of these magnificent creatures.

September

AFL Grand Final (www.afl.com.au) The football season culminates with one of Australia's biggest sporting events: the AFL Grand Final at the MCG in Melbourne on the last Saturday in September.

October

IndyCar (www.indy.com.au) Rev your engine for the IndyCar race and the parties that follow in its tailwind. Surfers Paradise is manic at the best of times but during this three-day celebration it really goes off. See p298 for more. **Melbourne International Arts Festival** (www.melbournefestival.com.au) This annual festival offers some of the best of opera, theatre, dance and the visual arts from around Australia and the world. It starts in early October and runs to early November.

November

Melbourne Cup (www.melbournecup.com.au) Australia's premier horse race is in Melbourne, but the whole country shuts down while the race is run. Many country towns schedule race meetings to coincide with it; people take the afternoon off work and wear posh hats at the pub.

December

Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race (rolexsydneyhobart.com) Sydney Harbour is a sight to behold on Boxing Day (26 December), when boats of all shapes and sizes crowd its waters to farewell the yachts competing in this gruelling race.

Woodford Folk Festival (www.woodfordfolkfestival.com) Held between Christmas and New Year, this five-day festival in Queensland's Glass House Mountains is Australia's largest folk festival (see the boxed text, p338).

FOOD

There's an impressive range and quality of food in the major cities of the East Coast, largely thanks to the immigrants who flooded into Australia in the late 20th century, bringing their cuisines with them. The eating recommendations provided in this book are grouped into restaurants, cafés, quick eats, and self-catering.

Quality restaurants charge from \$15 to \$40 or more for a main course. The best value can be found in ethnic restaurants and modern cafés, where a good meal in casual surroundings can cost less than \$20 and a cooked breakfast will set you back about \$10. A number of inner-city pubs offer upmarket restaurant-style fare, but most serve standard (often large-portion) bistro meals, usually in the \$10 to \$20 range. Bar (or counter) meals, which are eaten in the public bar, usually cost between \$6 and \$10. Generally, opening hours for breakfast are between 6am and 11am, lunch is served from around noon to 3pm and dinner usually starts after 6pm.

See p51 for more on what makes the East Coast such a dining delight.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

The East Coast of Australia – Sydney especially – is a popular destination for gay and lesbian travellers. Certain areas are the focus of the gay and lesbian communities: Cairns and Noosa in Queensland; Sydney's Oxford St and Kings Cross; the Blue Mountains, Hunter Valley and the NSW north-coast hinterland; and the Melbourne suburbs of Prahran, St Kilda and Collingwood are all popular areas. As well as Sydney's Mardi Gras (opposite) in February to

early March, there's Melbourne's Midsumma Festival (p486) in January and February.

In general Australians are open-minded about homosexuality, but the further out of the big towns and cities you get, the more likely you are to run into homophobia. Homosexual acts are legal in all states but the age of consent between males varies. In the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and NSW it is 16 years, and in Queensland it is 18.

Australia's gay community produces a wide range of publications including *DNA*, *Lesbians on the Loose* and the art magazine *Blue*.

Useful websites:

Gay & Lesbian Tourism Australia (Galta; www.galta.com.au) General info.

Pink Board (www.pinkboard.com.au) Sydney-based, with useful forums.

Queer Australia (www.queeraustralia.com) More general info.

HOLIDAYS

Public Holidays

Public holidays vary quite a bit from state to state. The following is a list of the main national and state public holidays; for precise dates (which may vary from year to year), check locally (* indicates holidays are only observed locally).

NATIONAL

New Year's Day 1 January

Australia Day 26 January

Easter (Good Friday to Easter Monday) March/April

Anzac Day 25 April

Queen's Birthday Second Monday in June

Christmas Day 25 December

Boxing Day 26 December

NEW SOUTH WALES

Bank Holiday First Monday in August

Labour Day First Monday in October

QUEENSLAND

Labour Day First Monday in May

RNA Show Day (Brisbane) August*

VICTORIA

Labour Day Second Monday in March

Melbourne Cup Day First Tuesday in November*

School Holidays

The Christmas holiday season, from mid-December to late January, is part of the summer school vacation; it's the time you are

most likely to find East Coast accommodation booked out and long queues at tourist attractions. There are three shorter school-holiday periods during the year, but they vary by a week or two from state to state. They fall 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. Most policies offer lower and higher medical-expense options; the higher ones are chiefly for countries that have extremely high medical costs, such as the USA. There is a wide variety of policies available, so compare the small print.

Some policies specifically exclude designated 'dangerous activities' such as scuba diving, parasailing, bungee jumping, motorcycling, skiing and even bushwalking. If you plan on doing any of these things, make sure the policy you choose fully covers you for your activity of choice.

See p505 for information on health insurance and p500 for information on insurance related to car travel and rental.

INTERNET ACCESS

Most East Coast towns have places where you can access the internet, usually for about \$6 to \$8 an hour. In really popular places, you'll find access in convenience stores, travel agencies, visitors centres and more. Hostels almost always have internet access.

Wi-fi is finally becoming more widespread in Australia. Popular tourist towns often have cafés with wireless access – often for free (with purchase). Ask at visitors centres. Hotels are catching up with other parts of the world as well and you can usually find a place that will let you get online with your laptop or other device in most towns. Beware, however, many chain hotels and more expensive places charge outrageous prices for wi-fi access, often as much as \$20 an hour. In this book, we've noted places that let you surf with wi-fi in the listings.

Also see Internet Resources, p26.

LEGAL MATTERS

Most travellers will have no contact with the Australian police or any other part of the legal system. Those that do are likely to experience it while driving. The country's roads have a significant police presence, with the power

TAX REFUNDS

If you purchase new or secondhand goods with a total minimum value of \$300 from any one supplier no more than 30 days before you leave Australia, you are entitled under the Tourist Refund Scheme (TRS) to a refund of any GST paid (usually 10%). 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 has been spent at each. For more information, contact the **Australian Customs Service** (☎ 1300 363 263; www.customs.gov.au).

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 who are caught with small amounts of illegal drugs are likely to get 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 phone a friend, a relative or a lawyer before any formal questioning begins. Legal Aid is available only in serious cases and only to the truly needy (for links to Legal Aid offices see www.nla.aust.net.au). However, many solicitors do not charge for an initial consultation.

MAPS

You'll find plenty of maps available when you arrive in Australia. Visitors centres usually have free maps of the region and towns, although quality varies. Automobile associations (p499) are a good source of reliable road maps.

City street directories such as those produced by Ausway and UBD are very useful but they're expensive, bulky and usually only worth getting if you intend to do a lot of driving in one city.

For bushwalking and other outdoor activities for which large-scale maps are essential, browse the topographic sheets put out by **Geoscience Australia** (☎ 02-6249 9111, 1800 800 173; www.ga.gov.au). Many of the more popular sheets are usually available over the counter at outdoor-equipment shops.

MONEY

In this book, unless otherwise stated, all prices given in dollars refer to Australian dollars. Exchange rates are listed inside the front cover. For an idea of the costs of travel in East Coast Australia, see p23. Many purchases have a 10% goods and services tax (GST) included in the price.

ATMs & Eftpos

ANZ, Commonwealth, National and Westpac bank branches are found nationwide and most have 24-hour ATMs. Of course, you won't find ATMs everywhere – not off the beaten track or in very small towns – so make sure you've got cash if you're heading well away from population centres. Most ATMs now accept cards from other banks and are linked to international networks.

Eftpos (Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale) is a very convenient service that many Australian businesses have embraced. It means you can use your bank card to pay for services or purchases direct, and often withdraw cash as well. Eftpos is available practically everywhere these days, but many places demand a minimum purchase of about \$10.

Credit Cards

Visa and MasterCard credit cards are accepted widely along the East Coast. Charge cards such as Diners Club and American Express are not as widely accepted. Credit cards can also be used to get cash advances over the counter at banks and from many ATMs, depending on the card. Fees for using your credit card at a foreign bank or ATM can be high; ask before you leave.

The most flexible option is to carry both a credit and a debit card; some banking institutions link the two to one card.

Currency

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

Exchanging Money

Changing travellers cheques or foreign currency usually isn't a problem at banks in the region. Licensed moneychangers such as

American Express will only be found in major cities; most large hotels will change currency or travellers cheques for guests, but the rates are generally poor.

Tipping

In Australia, tipping is not mandatory as it is in the USA. As in the UK and most of continental Europe, it's customary to tip in restaurants and also in upmarket cafés. This applies more in the cities, particularly Melbourne and Sydney. Out in the sticks, a tip might be received with a level of surprise. Tip if you think the service warrants it; 5% to 10% of the bill is usually enough. Taxi drivers don't expect tips as such but many of them do expect you to round up to the nearest dollar and may fuss over the handing out of change if you don't offer.

Travellers Cheques

Amex, Thomas Cook and other well-known international brands of travellers cheques are easily exchanged. You need to present your passport for identification when cashing them.

Increasingly, international travellers simply withdraw cash from ATMs, enjoying the convenience and the usually decent exchange rates.

POST

Australia's postal services are efficient and reasonably cheap. **Australia Post** (www.auspost.com.au) has offices in almost every town although some are part of larger commercial establishments and it may seem easier to buy a card than actually mail it.

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. Post office opening hours are generally 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

SOLO TRAVELLERS

People travelling alone along the East Coast face the unpredictability that is an inherent part of making contact with entire communities of strangers: sometimes you'll be completely ignored, and other times you'll be greeted with such enthusiasm it's as if you've been spontaneously adopted. Suffice to say that the latter moments will likely become highlights of your trip.

Solo travellers are a common sight in Australia and there is certainly no stigma attached to lone visitors. In some places you may find there's an expectation that solo visitors 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.

TELEPHONE

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

Domestic & International Calls INFORMATION & TOLL-FREE CALLS

Numbers starting with ☎ 190 are usually recorded-information services, charged at anything from 35¢ to \$5 or more per minute (more if dialled 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 Australia, though they may not be accessible from interstate or from mobile phones. Calls to numbers beginning with ☎ 13 or ☎ 1300 are charged at the rate of a local call. Telephone numbers beginning with ☎ 1800, ☎ 13 or ☎ 1300 cannot be dialled from outside Australia.

INTERNATIONAL CALLS

If dialling from overseas, the country code is ☎ 61 and you need to drop the 0 (zero) in the area codes.

Most payphones allow ISD (International Subscriber Dialling) calls; the cost and international dialling code 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.

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

When calling overseas you need to dial the international access code from Australia (☎ 0011 or ☎ 0018).

INTERNET CALLS

Many internet places let you make cheap international calls; sometimes for as little 1¢ per minute. It's also common at the more savvy places for the computers to be equipped so you can use Skype (www.skype.com) and other voice-over-internet (VoIP) services.

LOCAL CALLS

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

LONG DISTANCE CALLS & AREA CODES

For long-distance calls, East Coast Australia uses four Subscriber Trunk Dialling (STD) area codes. STD calls can be made from virtually any public phone and are cheaper during off-peak hours, generally between 7pm and 7am. Long-distance calls (ie to more than about 50km away) within these areas are charged at long-distance rates, even though they have the same area code. The following are the area codes in East Coast Australia:

| State/Territory | Area code |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| Australian Capital Territory | ☎ 02 |
| New South Wales | ☎ 02 |
| Queensland | ☎ 07 |
| Victoria | ☎ 03 |

Mobile Phones

Local numbers with the prefixes ☎ 04xx or ☎ 04xxx belong to mobile phones. Australia's mobile networks service more than 90% of the population, but vast tracts of Australia's interior are not covered. The East Coast gets good reception, but away from the major towns it can be haphazard or nonexistent.

Australia's digital network is compatible with GSM 900 and 1800 (used in Europe), but generally not with some CDMA systems used in the USA or Japan. It's easy and cheap enough to get connected short-term, though, as the main service providers all have prepaid mobile schemes. If you have an unlocked GSM phone, you can get a local SIM card and phone number for under \$30 (with a basic phone \$60); try any of the carriers listed above.

Phoncards

A wide range of phoncards is available; these can be bought at 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. Some public phones also accept credit cards, although this can be a ripoff.

TIME

Victoria, NSW and Queensland keep Eastern Standard Time, which is 10 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (UTC). When it's noon in Sydney, the time in London is 3am (April to October) or 1am (November to March); 5pm/7pm the previous day in Los Angeles, 8pm/10pm the previous day in New York and 2pm in Auckland.

Daylight savings – for which clocks are put forward an hour – operates in Victoria and NSW from the last Sunday in October to the first Sunday in April. Queensland doesn't have daylight-savings time.

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Disability awareness in Australia is reasonably high. Legislation requires that new accommodation must meet accessibility standards and tourist operators must not discriminate.

Reliable information is the key ingredient for travellers with disabilities, and the best place to start is the **National Information Communication & Awareness Network** (Nican; ☎ /TTY 02-6241 1220, TTY 1800 806 769; www.nican.com.au). It's an Australia-wide directory providing information on access, accommodation, sporting and recreational activities, transport and specialist tour operators.

The website of the **Australian Tourist Commission** (ATC; www.australia.com) publishes detailed, downloadable information for people with disabilities, including travel and transport tips and contact addresses of organisations in each state.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist information is provided in Australia by various regional and local offices, details of which are given in the relevant city and town sections throughout this book. Each state has a government-run tourist organisation ready to inundate you with information. Check out the following:

Tourism New South Wales (www.visitnsw.com)

Tourism Queensland (☎ 13 88 33; www.queenslandholidays.com.au)

Tourism Victoria (☎ 13 28 42; www.visitvictoria.com)

The **Australian Tourism Commission** (www.australia.com) is the government body charged with luring foreign visitors; the website has information in eight languages. For ATC branches in other countries visit www.tourism.australia.com.

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 and the website of the **Department of Immigration & Citizenship** (☎ 13 18 81; www.immi.gov.au). There are several types of visa, as explained following.

Electronic Travel Authority

Many visitors can get an Electronic Travel Authority (ETA) through travel agents registered with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) or through an overseas airline. They make the application direct when you buy a ticket and issue the ETA, which replaces the usual visa stamped in your passport; it's common practice for travel agents to charge a fee for issuing an ETA (usually US\$25). This system is available to passport holders of some 32 countries, including the UK, the USA and Canada, most European and Scandinavian countries, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan and Korea. You can also make an online ETA application at www.eta.immi.gov.au, which costs \$20.

Tourist Visas

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

Visa Extensions

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

Working Holiday Makers Visas

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

The emphasis of this visa is on casual and not full-time employment, so you're only supposed to work for any one employer for a maximum of six months. This visa can only be applied for at Australian diplomatic missions abroad and you can't change from a tourist visa to a WHM visa once you're in Australia. You can also apply for this visa online at www.immi.gov.au/visitors/working-holiday.

You can apply for this visa up to a year in advance, which is worthwhile as there's a limit on the number issued each year. Conditions include having a return air ticket or sufficient funds for a return or onward fare, and an application fee of \$185 is charged. For details of what sort of employment is available and where, see p493.

VOLUNTEERING

There are a lot of opportunities to volunteer your time and expertise in Australia. Resources include:

Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA; ☎ 1800 032 501, 03-5330 2600; www.conservationvolunteers.com.au)

Organises practical conservation projects such as tree planting, walking-track construction and flora and fauna surveys.

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.

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

Willing Workers on Organic Farms (WWOOF; ☎ 03-5155 0218; www.wwoof.com.au) Work on a farm in return for bed and board.

You will also find local opportunities listed in chapters throughout this book. For a list of opportunities in Brisbane and Queensland, see p318.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Australia is generally a safe place for women travellers, although the usual sensible precautions apply. It's best to avoid walking alone late at night in any of the major cities and

towns. And if you're out on the town, always keep enough money aside for a taxi back to your accommodation. Lone women should be wary of staying in basic pub accommodation unless it looks safe and well managed.

WORK

New Zealanders can work in Australia without having to apply for a special visa or permit, but other short-term visitors can only work in Australia if they have a Working Holiday Makers (WHM) visa (see opposite). Major tourist centres such as the resort towns along the Queensland coast and the ski fields of Victoria and NSW are all good prospects for casual work during peak seasons.

Seasonal fruit-picking (harvesting) relies on casual labour, and there is something to be picked, pruned or farmed somewhere in Australia all year round. It's hard work that involves early-morning starts, and you're usually paid by how much you pick (per bin/bucket); expect to earn A\$50 to A\$60 a day to start with, more when you get quicker at it.

Other options for casual employment include factory work, labouring, bar work and waiting on tables. People with computer, secretarial, nursing and teaching skills can find work temping in the major cities by registering with a relevant agency. See the websites below for contact details of some agencies.

Information

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

Useful websites:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Taxes

If you have a WHM visa, you should apply for a tax file number (TFN). Without it, tax will be deducted from any wages you receive at the maximum rate (around 47%). Apply for a TFN online via the **ATO** (www.ato.gov.au); it takes about four weeks to be issued. The office can provide additional info about paying taxes and refunds.

Transport

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GETTING THERE & AWAY

This section covers how to get to and from major cities along the East Coast for visitors to Australia. For information about travelling along the East Coast see p497.

ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Disembarkation in Australia is generally a straightforward affair, with only the usual customs declarations (p483) and the race to the luggage carousel to endure. However, global instability in the last few years has resulted in conspicuously increased security in Australian airports, and you may find that customs procedures are now more time-consuming. Morning immigration lines at Sydney Airport's international terminal can seem endless.

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.

Passport

There are no restrictions when it comes to foreign citizens entering Australia. If you have a visa (p492) you should be fine.

AIR Domestic

The domestic airline industry has undergone some major upheavals in recent years, with intense competition among airlines. Few people pay full fare as the airlines continue to offer a wide range of discounts. These come and go and there are regular special fares, so keep your eyes open.

See p497 for a list of carriers flying within Australia.

International

There are lots of competing airlines and a wide variety of air fares to choose from if you're flying in from Asia, Europe or North America, but you'll still pay a lot for a flight. If you plan to fly at a particularly popular time of year (Christmas is notoriously difficult for Sydney and Melbourne) or on a particularly popular route (such as Hong Kong, Bangkok or Singapore to Sydney or Melbourne), make your arrangements well in advance of your trip.

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

Airlines

The East Coast's Sydney and Melbourne airports (Australia's busiest international gateways), as well as those in Brisbane and Cairns have international service.

Air Canada (☎ 1300 655 767; www.aircanada.ca) Flies to Sydney.

Air New Zealand (☎ 13 24 76; www.airnz.com.au) Flies to Brisbane, Cairns, Melbourne and Sydney.

British Airways (☎ 1300 767 177; www.britishairways.com.au) Flies to Sydney.

Cathay Pacific (☎ 13 17 47; www.cathaypacific.com) Flies to Brisbane, Cairns, Melbourne and Sydney.

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 travel 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 jetsetters 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.

Emirates (☎ 1300 303 777; www.emirates.com) Flies to Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney.

Garuda Indonesia (☎ 1300 365 330; www.garuda-indonesia.com) Flies to Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney.

Japan Airlines (☎ 02-9272 1111; www.au.jal.com) Flies to Brisbane, Cairns, Melbourne and Sydney.

Malaysian Airlines (☎ 13 26 27; www.malaysiaairlines.com.au) Flies to Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney.

Qantas (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) Flies to all major Australian cities.

Singapore Airlines (☎ 13 10 11; www.singaporeair.com.au) Flies to Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney.

Thai Airways International (☎ 1300 651 960; www.thaiairways.com.au) Flies to Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney.

Tiger Airways (www.tigerairways.com; 03-9335 3033) Flies to Melbourne via Darwin and Perth and then on to numerous East Coast destinations.

United Airlines (☎ 13 17 77; www.unitedairlines.com.au) Flies to Melbourne and Sydney.

Virgin Atlantic (☎ 1300 727 340; www.virgin-atlantic.com) Flies to Sydney.

Tickets

Travel agents may offer good fares to Australia but with airline commissions down, you may have to pay a service fee to buy a ticket.

Plenty of websites exist to find the best airfares to Australia. It's usually a good

idea to compare the results (both fares and routings) from several sites. In addition airline websites often have web-only fares unavailable elsewhere.

Cheap Flights (www.cheapflights.com) Compares the fares found on several sites.

Cheapest Flights (www.cheapestflights.co.uk) Cheap worldwide flights from the UK.

Expedia (www.expedia.com) Large mainstream site; has international variations for several countries.

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

Kayak (www.kayak.com) Good site; compares results from airline and booking sites.

Opodo (www.opodo.com) Has localised French, German and UK sites.

Orbitz (www.orbitz.com) Large mainstream site serving travellers from the US.

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

Travel.com.au (www.travel.com.au) Good Australian site; look up fares and flights into and out of the country.

Travelocity (www.travelocity.com) Large mainstream site; has international variations for several countries.

Roundtheworld.com (www.roundtheworldflights.com) Allows you to build your own multitravel trip from the UK.

Zuji (www.zuji.com.au) Good Asia Pacific-based site.

ROUND-THE-WORLD TICKETS

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

An alternative type of RTW ticket is one put together by a travel agent. These are usually more expensive than airline RTW fares but allow you to devise your own itinerary.

Asia

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

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

Tiger Airways, a Singapore-based budget carrier, has services from Asia via Singapore to Darwin and Perth and then on to Melbourne, where it has a burgeoning network of domestic flights.

Canada

The air routes from Canada are similar to those from mainland USA, with most passengers stopping in a US gateway such as Los Angeles or San Francisco, although Air Canada now has nonstop Vancouver–Sydney service.

Continental Europe

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

New Zealand

Air New Zealand and Qantas operate a network of flights linking key New Zealand cities

with most major Australian gateway cities, while a few other international airlines include New Zealand and Australia on their Asia–Pacific routes.

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

There's usually not a significant difference in price between seasons, as this is a popular route year-round, although prices can increase over the Christmas period.

UK & Ireland

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

USA

Most of the flights between the North American mainland and Australia travel to and from the USA's west coast, with Los Angeles and San Francisco the gateways.

Partial deregulation of the Australian and US air market in 2008 will allow some new carriers on these routes that will hopefully bring lower fares to what have been overpriced routes (Qantas and United have enjoyed a duopoly). The first airline to announce service is **V Australia** (www.vaustralia.com.au), an offshoot of Virgin Blue.

Numerous airlines offer flights via Asia or various Pacific islands.

SEA

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

Good places on the Australian East Coast include Coffs Harbour, Great Keppel Island, Airlie Beach and the Whitsundays, and Cairns – basically anywhere boats call.

GETTING AROUND

AIR

East Coast Australia is well serviced by airlines. The following have service throughout the region and across Australia.

Jetstar (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com.au) Budget offshoot of Qantas has extensive service.

Qantas/QantasLink (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) Service across Australia.

Tiger Airways (www.tigerairways.com) Budget airline with Melbourne as a hub. Serves a swath of East Coast destinations from Mackay to Canberra.

Virgin Blue (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au) Has service throughout Australia.

The following small airlines offer limited regional service within East Coast Australia.

Macair (☎ 13 13 13; www.macair.com.au) Flies to small Queensland towns from Cairns, Townsville and Brisbane.

Regional Express (Rex; ☎ 13 17 13; www.regional-express.com.au) Serves primarily small towns from Melbourne and Sydney.

Skytrans (☎ 1800 818 405, 07-4046 2462; www.skytrans.com.au) Flies between Cairns, Cooktown, Brisbane and Palm Island.

BICYCLE

Whether you're hiring a bike to ride around a city or wearing out your chain wheels on a long-distance haul, the East Coast is a great place for cycling. There are bike paths in most major cities, and in the country you'll find thousands of kilometres of good roads. In many areas along the coast the countryside is flat or composed of gently rolling hills.

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

No matter how fit you are, water is vital. Dehydration is no joke and heatstroke can be life threatening (see p508). It can get very hot in summer, and you should take things easy, wear a helmet with a peak (or a cap under your helmet) and plenty of sunscreen, avoid cycling in the middle of the day and drink lots of water. Remember that it can get very cold in the mountains, so pack appropriately. In the south, be aware of the blistering hot

'northerlies' that can make a northbound cyclist's life hell in summer.

Bicycle helmets are compulsory, as are white front lights and red rear lights for riding at night. Most good-sized towns will have a shop stocking at least basic bike parts.

INFORMATION

The national cycling body is the **Bicycle Federation of Australia** (☎ 02-6249 6761; www.bfa.asn.au). Each state and territory has a touring organisation that can also help with cycling information and put you in touch with touring clubs.

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

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

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

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

For more information see p67, and Lonely Planet's *Cycling Australia* (new edition due September 2009).

PURCHASE & HIRE

It can be surprisingly difficult to find places that hire out bikes for longer than a day or two, so if you're coming specifically to tour, it makes sense to bring your own; check with your airline for costs and the degree of dismantling and packing required.

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

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

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 from \$10 to \$15 per hour and \$15 to \$40 per day. Security deposits can range from \$50 to \$200, depending on the rental period.

BUS

Other than hitching, bus travel is generally the cheapest way to get around and it gives you the greatest coverage. But it can be a tedious form of transport and requires a bit of planning if you intend to do more than straightforward city-to-city trips. Travelling by bus also means you can miss out on seeing off-the-beaten-track highlights away from the main coastal highways. Local services can be very hit or miss. See individual city listings in this book to see what bus options exist.

There's only one national bus network, **Greyhound Australia** (☎ 13 14 99; www.greyhound.com.au). The next biggest player on the East Coast is **Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10; www.premiers.com.au). Premier is the main competitor to Greyhound on the East Coast route and is the only major carrier that still makes the Princes Hwy (Hwy 1) run south of Sydney. It has fewer services per day but usually costs a few dollars less on most routes and goes the distance from Melbourne to Cairns.

There are also many smaller bus companies either operating locally or specialising in one or two main intercity routes. These often offer the best deals – **Firefly Express** (☎ 1800 631 164; www.fireflyexpress.com.au) charges \$65 for a Sydney-to-Melbourne express (via the Hume Hwy) for example. In Victoria, **VLine** (☎ 13 61 96; www.vlinepassenger.com.au) operates bus services to places trains no longer go, and in NSW **Countrylink** (☎ 13 22 32; www.countrylink.nsw.gov.au) does the same.

In most towns up the East Coast there is just one bus terminal, and in very small towns there might not even be a terminal – just a drop-off/pick-up point.

Backpacker Buses

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

Discounts for card-carrying students and members of hostel organisations are usually available.

Autopia Tours (☎ 1800 000 507; www.autopiatours.com.au) The 3-day Melbourne–Sydney tour goes via Wilsons Prom, the Snowy Mountains and Canberra (\$400). **Oz Experience** (☎ 1300 300 028; www.ozexperience.com) A hop-on, hop-off service you will either love or hate. Travellers have complained about seat availability and a boozy culture, while others love the social experience. The network covers central, northern and eastern Australia. Travel is one-directional and passes are valid for up to six months with unlimited stops. A Melbourne–Cairns pass is \$770.

Bus Passes

Bus passes are a good option if you plan plenty of stopovers. You should book or phone at least a day ahead to reserve a seat if you're using any of the following passes.

Greyhound (☎ 13 14 99; www.greyhound.com.au) offers many passes and it's worth checking its website or brochures, available at travel agents and Greyhound offices, for full details. There's a 10% discount for members of YHA, VIP, Nomads and other approved organisations, as well as card-carrying students.

The Aussie Kilometre Pass is the simplest and gives you a specified amount of travel, starting at 500km (\$99) and going up in increments to 20,000km (\$2209). The pass is valid for 12 months; you can travel where and in what direction you like, and stop as many times as you like. A 2000km pass (\$360) will get you from Brisbane to Cairns, or 4000km (\$657) will get you from Melbourne to Cairns.

Greyhound also has several Aussie Explorer Passes, with several covering much of the East Coast. With these passes you don't get the go-anywhere flexibility of the Aussie Kilometre Pass (you can't backtrack), but if you can find a route that suits you it generally works out cheaper.

Premier (☎ 13 34 10; www.premiers.com.au) offers several passes for travel along the East Coast. One good for six months of travel between Melbourne and Cairns costs \$320. There are 10% discounts for members of YHA, VIP, Nomads and other approved organisations, as well as card-carrying students.

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 average, nondiscounted, one-way bus fares on some well-travelled Australian routes. Look for web specials.

Melbourne to Canberra (adult/child/concession \$75/65/70)

Melbourne to Sydney (adult/child/concession \$80/60/70)

Sydney to Byron Bay (adult/child/concession \$90/80/85)

Sydney to Brisbane (adult/child/concession \$90/80/85)

Brisbane to Airlie Beach (adult/child/concession \$150/130/140)

Brisbane to Cairns (adult/child/concession \$200/170/180)

Reservations

During summer, school holidays and public holidays, you should book well ahead, especially on the intercity services. At other times you should have few problems getting onto your preferred service. But if your long-term travel plans rely on catching a particular bus, book at least a day or two ahead.

You should make a reservation at least a day in advance if you're using a travel pass.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The best way to see the East Coast is by car – it's certainly the only way to get to those interesting out-of-the-way places without taking a tour.

Diesel and unleaded fuel is available from service stations. LPG (gas) is also available in the populated areas but not always at more remote service stations – if you're on gas it's safer to have dual fuel capacity. Prices vary according to place and time. On main East Coast highways there's usually a small town or a petrol station roughly every 50km or so.

Motorcycles are very popular, as the climate is just about ideal for bikes for much of

the year. 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 you to import your vehicle without paying customs duty or taxes. To get one, apply to a motoring organisation/association in your home country. You'll also need a rider's licence and a helmet. A fuel range of 350km will easily cover fuel stops up the East Coast and, for that matter, around the continent. The long, open roads are really made for large-capacity machines above 750cc.

Automobile Associations

The national **Australian Automobile Association** (www.aaa.asn.au) is an umbrella organisation for the various state associations and maintains links with similar bodies throughout the world. Day-to-day operations are handled by the state organisations, which provide emergency breakdown services, literature, excellent touring maps and detailed guides to accommodation and camp sites.

The state organisations have reciprocal arrangements with other states and with similar organisations overseas. So, if you're a member of the National Roads and Motorists Association (NRMA) in NSW, you can use the facilities of the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV). Similarly, 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 Australian state organisations' facilities (the maps are worth it alone). Bring proof of membership with you.

The main state association contact details:
NSW & ACT NRMA (☎ 13 21 32; www.nrma.com.au)
Queensland RACQ (☎ 13 19 05; www.racq.com.au)
Victoria RACV (☎ 13 19 55; www.racv.com.au)

INTERSTATE QUARANTINE

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

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

Driving Licence

You can use your home country's driving licence in Victoria, NSW and QLD, as long as it is written in English (if it's in another language, a certified translation must be carried) and carries your photograph for identification.

Hire

There are plenty of car-rental companies ready and willing to put you behind the wheel. Between a group, car hire can be reasonably economical. The main thing to remember is distance – if you want to travel far, you need unlimited kilometres.

Major companies:

Avis (☎ 13 63 33; www.avis.com.au)

Budget (☎ 1300 362 8484; www.budget.com.au)

Hertz (☎ 13 30 39; www.hertz.com.au)

Thrifty (☎ 13 61 39; www.thrifty.com.au)

These companies have offices or agents in most major towns. There is a vast number of local firms which are sometimes cheaper than the big operators, but cheap car hire often comes with serious restrictions.

The big firms sometimes offer one-way rentals; pick up a car in Melbourne and leave it in Sydney, for example. There are, however, a variety of restrictions on this and sometimes there's a substantial drop-off fee.

The major companies offer a choice of deals, either unlimited kilometres or 100km or so a day free plus so many cents per kilometre over this. Daily rates are typically from \$50 a day for a small car, from \$75 to \$80 a day for a medium car, or \$85 to \$100 a day for a big car, not including insurance. Note that booking your car through one of the large travel websites (or directly with the majors) can often save you quite a bit of money rather than waiting to do so in Australia. From the US, for instance, rates under US\$40 per day with unlimited kilometres are common.

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 gets 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.

4WD & CAMPERVAN

Having a 4WD enables you to get right off the beaten track and out to some of the natural wonders that most travellers miss. Check the

insurance conditions carefully, especially the excess, as they can be onerous. 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. Off-peak, you can find campervan deals starting at \$40 per day.

Hertz, Budget and Avis have 4WD rentals. Specialist rental firms include:

Backpacker Campervans (☎ 1800 670 232; www.backpackercampervans.com.au) Rents campervans.

Britz Rentals (☎ 1800 331 454; www.britz.com) Hires fully equipped 4WDs fitted out as campervans.

Wicked Campers (☎ 07-3634 9000, 1800 246 869; www.wickedcampers.com.au) Has vehicles emblazoned with profane commentary such as 'Lawyers come from anal intercourse'. Your tastes may vary.

Insurance

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

When it comes to hire cars, understand your liability in the event of an accident. Rather than risk paying out thousands of dollars, you can take out your own comprehensive car insurance or pay an additional daily amount (often ridiculously high) to the rental company for an 'insurance excess reduction' policy. This reduces the excess you must pay in the event of an accident from between \$2000 and \$5000 to a few hundred dollars. Check with your credit-card company as many provide this coverage for free with use of your card.

Be aware that if travelling on dirt roads you will not be covered by insurance unless you have a 4WD. Also, most companies' insurance won't cover the cost of damage to glass (including the windscreen) or tyres. Although, again, your credit-card company may cover this. Check.

Purchase

If you're planning a stay of several months with plenty of driving, buying is much cheaper than renting. But remember that reliability is all-important. You'll probably get any car cheaper by buying privately through newspaper classifieds rather than through a

car dealer. Buying through a dealer does have the advantage of some sort of guarantee, but this might not be much use if you plan to take the car to another state.

There's plenty of debate among travellers about where the best place is to buy and sell used cars. Sydney is a particularly good place to buy cars from backpackers who have finished their trips. These vehicles will have done plenty of kilometres but they often come complete with camping gear, Eskies (large insulated containers for food or drink), water containers, tools and road maps. The best place to look is on hostel noticeboards or at car markets. Sydney is also well set up for travellers to sell vehicles; see p215 for more information. Twenty-year-old Toyotas will go for about \$2000.

When you come to buy or sell a car, every state has its own regulations, particularly with registration. In Vic, for example, a car has to have a compulsory safety check (Road Worthy Certificate; RWC) before it can be registered in the new owner's name. In NSW safety checks are compulsory every year when you come to renew the registration.

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.

Before you buy any vehicle, regardless of who the seller is, we strongly recommend that you have it thoroughly checked by a competent mechanic. The state automobile associations have lists of reputable mechanics.

The **Register of Encumbered Vehicles** (REVS; ☎ 13 32 20; www.revs.nsw.gov.au) is a NSW government organisation that can check to ensure the car you're buying is fully paid-up and owned by the seller.

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; make sure you read the small print and don't accept any verbal guarantees – get it in writing. However, some dealers may find ways of knocking down the price when you return the vehicle, even if it was agreed to in writing – sometimes by pointing out expensive repairs that allegedly will be required to gain the dreaded RWC needed to transfer the registration.

A company that specialises in buy-back on cars and campervans is **Travellers Autobarn**

(☎ 02-9360 1500, 1800 674 374; www.travellers-autobarn.com.au). It has offices in Brisbane, Cairns, Melbourne and Sydney, and offers a range of vehicles.

Road Conditions & Hazards

Australia has few multilane highways, although there are stretches of divided road (four or six lanes) in some particularly busy areas such as the tollroads of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

However, if you think this is the case from Sydney to Brisbane, you are mistaken. Much of the Pacific Hwy (Hwy 1) in NSW is a clogged, two-lane mess. Going south from Sydney, the Hume Hwy in NSW and Victoria is modern but misses the coast. The Princes Hwy (Hwy 1), which runs on the coast from Sydney to Melbourne, is mostly two lanes, but traffic is normally not a problem.

You don't have to get far off the beaten track to find yourself on dirt roads. In fact, anybody who sets out to see the countryside in reasonable detail should expect some dirt-road travelling. The problem here is that if you have a hire car, the company's insurance won't cover you unless you've hired an expensive 4WD.

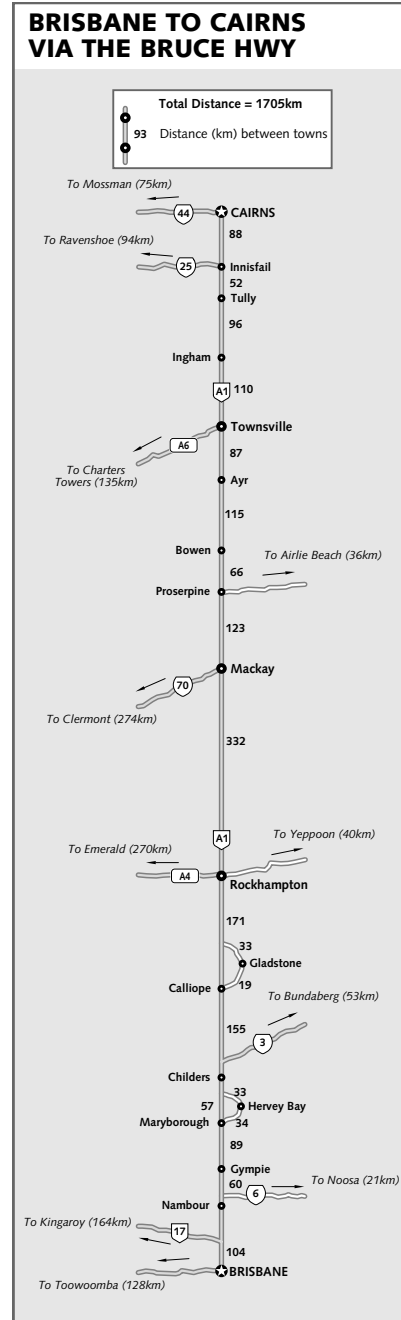
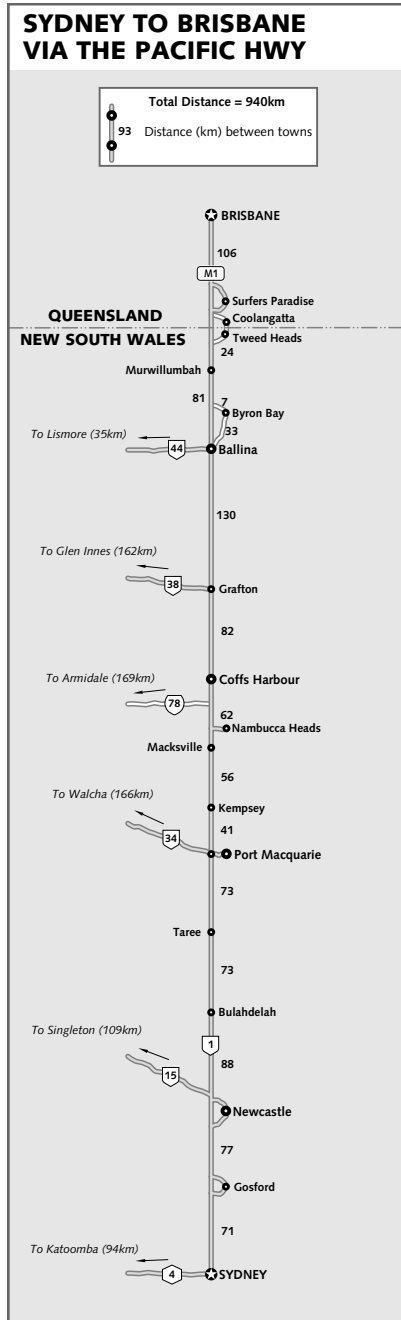
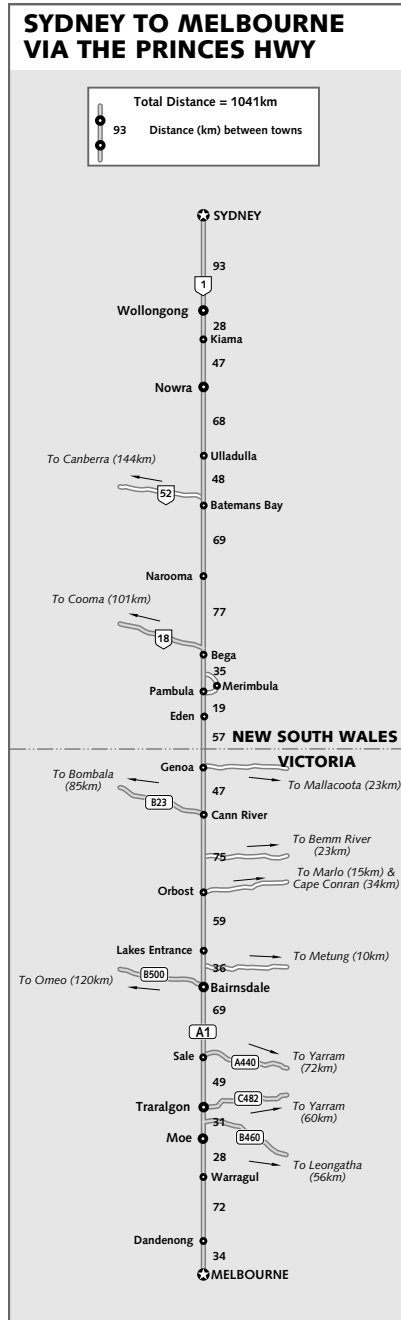
ANIMAL HAZARDS

Kangaroos are common hazards on country roads. If you're travelling at any sort of speed, hitting one can make a real mess of your car, not to mention the kangaroo. They are most active at dawn and dusk, and often travel in groups. Many Australians avoid travelling altogether after dark in country areas because of the hazards posed by animals.

If you are travelling at night and a large animal appears in front of you, hit the brakes (if there isn't a car right behind you), 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. It's better to damage your car and perhaps kill the animal than cause the death of yourself and your passengers and other motorists on the road.

Road Rules

Driving in Australia holds few 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 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 many residential streets. Near schools, the limit is 40km/h in the morning and afternoon. On the open highway it's usually 100km/h or 110km/h. Keep an eye out for signs. The police have radar and cameras, and are very fond of using them in strategically concealed locations.

Seatbelt usage is compulsory. Small children must be belted into an approved safety seat.

DRINK-DRIVING

Along the East Coast, drink-driving is a real problem, especially in country areas. Serious attempts are being made to reduce the road toll, and random breath tests are not uncommon in built-up areas. If you're caught with a blood-alcohol level of more than 0.05% be prepared for a hefty fine and the loss of your licence. In Vic you must be *under* 0.05%.

PARKING

One of the big problems with driving around big cities like Sydney and Melbourne (or popular tourist towns like Byron Bay) is finding somewhere to park. Even if you do find a spot there's likely to be a time restriction, a meter (or ticket machine) or both. Parking officers in Australia are like parking officers the world over – they'd put a ticket on a fire hydrant if it had wheels. Parking fines range from about \$50 to \$120 and if you park in a clearway your car will be towed away or clamped – look for signs. If your rental car draws the ticket, the fine will be charged to your credit card, sometimes months later.

In the cities there are large multistorey car parks where you can park all day for \$15 to \$30.

HITCHING

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

In Australia, the hitching signal can be a thumbs up, but a downward-pointed finger is more widely understood.

LOCAL TRANSPORT

Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney have public-transport systems utilising buses, trains, ferries and/or trams. Larger regional towns and cities along the East Coast have their own local bus systems. These usually operate from the main train station, or, where there isn't one, from the main long-distance coach terminal. If the town is large enough to warrant having a taxi fleet, taxis are found here as well. Local buses often are timed for school runs, making weekend travel tough. There's almost no service north of Cairns.

TRAIN

Train travel is a comfortable option for short-haul sectors along the East Coast – but it's also a few dollars more than travelling by bus and it may take a few hours longer. XPT stands for Express Passenger Train. These NSW trains link Sydney with Melbourne, Brisbane, Dubbo, Grafton and Casino.

Rail services within each state are run by that state's rail body, either government or private.

CityRail (☎ 13 15 00; www.cityrail.nsw.gov.au) Covers the NSW coast around Sydney and as far north as Newcastle; also to the Blue Mountains.

CountryLink (☎ 13 22 32; www.countrylink.info) In NSW, operates from Sydney south to Canberra and Melbourne and along the coast north to Brisbane (but *not* Byron Bay).

Queensland Rail (☎ 1300 131 722; www.qr.com.au) Operates various train services from Brisbane to Cairns.

V/Line (☎ 13 61 96; www.vline.com.au) Has train services in Victoria, including between Melbourne and Bairnsdale.

Costs

Children can travel for reduced fares; purchasing fares in advance saves you 30% to 50%. First class costs about 40% more than

economy. Discounted tickets usually require advance purchase. Australian and foreign students (with an ISIC) get a 50% discount on economy fares. Some standard one-way train fares:

Melbourne to Sydney (adult economy \$130)

Canberra to Sydney (adult economy \$60)

Sydney to Brisbane (adult economy \$130)

Brisbane to Cairns (adult economy \$220)

Reservations & Classes

During national holidays, school holidays and weekends it can be a good idea to book a seat. You can do this at railways stations or through the railway companies. Many discount fares require you to reserve well in advance.

Extra-cost sleeper service is available between Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Cairns. Some trains also carry 1st-class seats.

Train Passes

Coverage of the East Coast by rail isn't bad. Several useful passes are sold. **Rail Australia** (www.railaustralia.com.au) provides information on train passes available from the various rail companies.

Austrail Flexipass Allows travel across Australia for a set number of economy-class travelling days within a six-month period: \$950 for 15 days, \$1330 for 22 days and \$1570 for 29 days.

Backtracker Gives unlimited travel on Countrylink trains linking Sydney with Canberra, Melbourne and Brisbane. It costs \$220 for 14 days, \$255 for one month and \$275 for three months (your best value). It is only sold to non-Australians.

East Coast Discovery Pass Allows travel with unlimited stops over a designated route in one direction during a six-month period. The entire Melbourne to Cairns route costs \$500. You can buy shorter segments, such as Sydney to Brisbane (\$130).

Health Dr David Millar

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East Coast Australia is a remarkably healthy region in which to travel, considering that such a large portion of it lies in the tropics. Tropical diseases such as malaria are extremely rare, while others such as yellow fever are unknown, diseases of poor sanitation such as cholera and typhoid are unheard of. Thanks to Australia's isolation and quarantine standards, even some animal diseases such as rabies and foot-and-mouth disease have yet to be recorded.

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

BEFORE YOU GO

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

Bring medications in their original, clearly labelled containers. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing your medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes

REQUIRED & 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 websites of the **World Health Organization** (WHO; www.who.int) or the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (CDC; www.cdc.gov).

If you're really worried about health when travelling, there are a few vaccinations you could consider. The World Health Organization 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. When you're planning to travel it's 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.

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 extra insurance; check www.lonelyplanet.com for more information. Find out in advance if your insurance will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures. In Australia, as in many countries, doctors expect payment at the time of consultation. Make sure you get a receipt detailing the service and keep the contact details of the health provider. See p506 for details of health care in Australia.

INSURANCE

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

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 in case of cuts
- 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
- permethrin-containing insect spray for clothing, tents and bed nets
- sunblock
- oral rehydration salts
- iodine tablets or water filter (for water purification)

INTERNET RESOURCES

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

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. Other recommended references include *Traveller's Health*

by Dr Richard Dawood (Oxford University Press) and *International Travel Health Guide* by Stuart R Rose, MD (Travel Medicine Inc).

IN TRANSIT

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS

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.

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 contractions 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 fatigue, malaise, insomnia or nausea. To avoid jet lag drink plenty of (nonalcoholic) fluids and eat light meals. Upon arrival, expose yourself to sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep etc) as soon as possible.

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

ON THE EAST COAST OF AUSTRALIA

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Australia has an excellent health-care system. It's a mixture of privately run medical clinics and hospitals alongside a system of public hospitals funded by the government. The Medicare system covers Australian residents for some health-care costs. Visitors

from countries with which Australia has a reciprocal health-care agreement are eligible for benefits specified under the Medicare programme. Agreements are currently in place with New Zealand, the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Italy and Malta; check the details before departing these countries. In general, agreements provide for any 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 Australia's major centres.

Self-care

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

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

Pharmaceutical Supplies

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

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

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Bat lyssavirus Related to rabies; some deaths have occurred after bites. The risk is greatest for animal handlers and vets. Rabies vaccine is effective, but the risk to travellers is low.

Dengue fever Occurs in northern Queensland, particularly during the wet season (November to April). Also known as

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

Giardiasis Widespread in the waterways around Australia. As such, 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. Symptoms consist of bad-smelling diarrhoea, abdominal bloating and wind. Treatment is available (tinidazole or metronidazole).

Hepatitis C A growing problem among intravenous drug users. Blood transfusion services screen all blood before use. **HIV** Rates in Australia have stabilised and levels are similar to other Western countries. Clean needles and syringes are widely available through all chemists.

Malaria Not an ongoing problem in the region although isolated cases have occurred in northern Queensland. The risk to travellers is low.

Meningococcal disease Occurs worldwide and is a risk with prolonged dorm-style accommodation. A vaccine exists for some types (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 it causes headache, joint and muscular pains and a rash, and resolves after five to seven days.

Sexually transmitted diseases Occur at rates similar to most other Western countries. The most common symptoms are pain while passing urine and a discharge. Infection can also be present without symptoms. Throughout the country, you'll find sexual health clinics in all of the major hospitals. Always use a condom with any new sexual partner. Condoms are readily available in chemists and through vending machines in many public places including toilets.

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

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

TRAVELLER'S DIARRHOEA

Tap water is universally safe in Australia. All water other than tap or bottled water should be boiled, filtered or chemically disinfected

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.smarttraveller.gov.au)

Canada (www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english)

UK (www.doh.gov.uk)

USA (www.cdc.gov)

(with iodine tablets) to prevent traveller's diarrhoea and giardia.

If you develop diarrhoea, drink plenty of fluids, preferably an oral rehydration solution containing lots of salt and sugar. A few loose stools don't require treatment but if you have more than four or five stools a day, you should take an antibiotic (usually a quinolone drug) and an antidiarrhoeal agent (such as loperamide). If diarrhoea is bloody, persists for more than 72 hours or is accompanied by fever, shaking chills or severe abdominal pain you should seek medical attention.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Animal Bites & Stings

MARINE ANIMALS

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

Marine stings from jellyfish such as Chironex box and Irukandji also occur in Australia's tropical waters, particularly during the wet season (November to April). The box jelly 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 unless you have checked it's safe with local beach lifesavers. 'Stinger suits' (full-body Lycra swimsuits) prevent stinging, as do wetsuits. If you are stung, first aid consists of washing the skin with vinegar to prevent further discharge of remaining stinging cells, followed by rapid transfer to a hospital; antivenin is widely available.

SHARKS & CROCODILES

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

The risk of crocodile attack in tropical northern Australia is real but predictable and largely preventable. Discuss the local risk with

police or tourist agencies before swimming in rivers, water holes and in the sea.

SNAKES

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

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

SPIDERS

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

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

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

Heatstroke

There's very hot weather year-round in northern Queensland and during the summer months for most of the country. When arriving from a temperate or cold climate, it takes about two weeks for acclimatisation to occur. Before the body is acclimatised an excessive amount of salt is lost in perspiration, so increasing the salt in your diet is essential.

Heat exhaustion occurs when fluid intake does not keep up with fluid loss. Symptoms

include dizziness, fainting, fatigue, nausea or vomiting. 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 medical emergency, with heating of the brain leading to disorientation, hallucinations and seizures. Heatstroke is prevented 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.
- Stay with the vehicle rather than walking for help.

Hypothermia

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

Protection from mosquitoes, sandflies, ticks and leeches can be achieved by a combination of the following strategies:

- wear loose-fitting long-sleeved clothing
- apply 30% DEET on all exposed skin and repeat every three to four hours
- impregnate clothing with permethrin (an insecticide that kills insects but is completely safe to humans).

Surf Beaches & Drowning

The East Coast has exceptional surf, but beaches vary in their conditions: the slope off-shore can result in changeable and often powerful surf. The ground underwater may also hide depressions and sand bars. Check with local surf-lifesaving organisations and be aware of your expertise and limitations before entering the water.

Ultraviolet-Light Exposure

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. Monitor your exposure to sunlight closely. UV is strongest between 10am and 4pm so avoid skin exposure during these times year-round north of Coffs Harbour; spring to autumn between Coffs Harbour and Sydney; and from mid-spring to mid-autumn south of Sydney. Always use 30+ sunscreen, applied 30 minutes before going into the sun and repeated regularly, to minimise damage. Wear good sunglasses that filter out UV radiation.

Water-Borne Illness

Tap water is universally safe in the region. Increasing numbers of lakes, streams and rivers, however, are contaminated by bugs that cause diarrhoea, making water purification essential. The simplest way for you to purify water is to boil it thoroughly.

Consider purchasing a water filter. It's very important to read the specifications, so that you know exactly what it removes from the water and what it doesn't. Filtering will not remove all dangerous organisms, so if you can't 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

4WD – four-wheel-drive vehicle

ACT – Australian Capital Territory

ALP – Australian Labor Party

Anzac – Australian and New Zealand Army Corps

award wage – minimum pay rate

banana bender – resident of Queensland

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

BBQ – barbecue

bêche-de-mer – sea cucumber

bevan – mildly abusive Queensland term for an unsophisticated youth (elsewhere known as a *bogan*)

billabong – ox-bow bend in a river cut off by a changed watercourse; a water hole

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

bitumen – road with this surface

bogan – mildly abusive term for an unsophisticated youth

bombora – isolate patch of offshore reef ('bommie')

boogie board – half-sized surfboard

boom netting – riding through the surf on nets in the front or rear of a travelling boat

boomerang – curved, flat, wooden implement traditionally used by Aboriginal people for hunting

booner – mildly abusive *ACT* term for an unsophisticated youth

bora ring – circular area ringed with banked earth used for Aboriginal ceremonial purposes, created mainly in *NSW* and southeastern Queensland

bottle shop – liquor store, off-licence

box jellyfish – species of deadly jellyfish; also known as sea wasp, box jelly, sea jelly, stinger

brekkie – breakfast

budgie smuggler – small, tight men's bathing suit

bug – Moreton Bay/Balmain bug, a small edible crustacean

bunyip – mythical *bush* animal or spirit

bush, the – countryside, usually covered with trees or shrubs; anywhere away from the city

bush tucker – native foods, usually in the *outback*

bushranger – Australia's equivalent to the outlaws of the Wild West (some goodies, some baddies)

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

camp-o-tel – semipermanent tent with beds and lights

chook – chicken

counter meal – pub meal, usually eaten at the bar

cuppa – 'cup of' tea, coffee etc

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

dampier – bush loaf made from flour and water and cooked in a fire or camp oven

DEET – N, N diethyl-*m*-toluamide (a broad-spectrum insect repellent)

didjeridu, didj – cylindrical wooden musical instrument traditionally played by Aboriginal men. Sometimes spelt didgeridoo.

donga – sugar-cane cutter's cabin (archaic); prefabricated transportable cabin

Dreamtime, the – concept that forms the basis of Aboriginal spirituality, incorporating the creation of the world and spiritual energies around us

Dry, the – dry season in northern Australia

dunny – outdoor lavatory

Eftpos – electronic funds transfer at point of sale (method of paying for goods or services and withdrawing cash)

EPA – Environmental Protection Agency (in Queensland this government department runs the *QPWS*)

Esky – large insulated container for food or drink

flake – shark meat, often served in fish-and-chip shops

freshie – freshwater crocodile; see also *saltie*

galah – noisy cockatoo; noisy idiot

grog – general term for alcoholic drinks

gum tree – eucalyptus tree

jackeroo – young male trainee on a *station*

jillaroo – young female trainee on a *station*

jumper – sweater; pullover

Koorie – collective term used to identify Aboriginal people from southeastern Australia; in *NSW* spelt Koori; see also *Murri*

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

larrikin – someone who is playfully mischievous

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

live-aboard – cruise or dive boat offering accommodation

long black – double shot of espresso poured over hot water

mal – Malibu surfboard

mangrove – coastal tree that grows in salt water

middy – small (285ml) glass of beer, *NSW*; see also *pot*

milk bar – general store

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

mozzies – mosquitoes

Murri – collective term used to identify Aboriginal people from northeastern Australia; see also *Koorie*

NRMA – National Roads and Motorists Association (*NSW* automobile club)

NSW – New South Wales

outback – remote part of the *bush*

paddock – fenced area of land, usually intended for livestock

PADI – Professional Association of Diving Instructors (an international diving organisation that provides scuba training)

pokies – poker machines

pot – small (285ml) glass of beer, Victoria and Queensland; see also *middy*

QPWS – Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (parks division of the *EPA* in Queensland)

Queenslander – traditional raised timber dwelling; resident of Queensland

RACQ – Royal Automobile Club of Queensland

RACV – Royal Automobile Club of Victoria

rashie – 'rash-vest' (UV-resistant skin-tight surfing top)

road train – a truck pulling a number of linked trailers (semitrailer-trailer-trailer)

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

saltie – saltwater or estuarine crocodile; see also *freshie*

scar tree – a tree from which bark has been removed and treated to make canoes, dishes, shields or other items

schoolies – the weeks in late November or December when freshly graduated Australian teens head to the beach and drink themselves stupid

schooler – large glass of beer, *NSW*

scrub – *bush*; trees, shrubs and other plants growing in an arid area

sea wasp – deadly *box jellyfish*

sealed road – hard-surfaced or *bitumen*-covered road

shout – buy a round of drinks (as in 'It's your shout')

SLSC – Surf Life Saving Club, a branch of the *Surf Life Saving Association*; community venue operated by same

station – large farm

stinger – deadly *box jellyfish*

Stolen Generations – generations of indigenous children forcibly removed from their parents

stubby – 375ml bottle of beer

Surf Life Saving Association – a water-safety and rescue authority primarily staffed by volunteers

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

swagman – *vagabond* (archaic); itinerant labourer

terra nullius – legal concept that Australia was uninhabited at the time of British colonisation

thongs – flip-flops (footwear)

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

tucker – food

veggie – vegetable; vegetarian

walkabout – lengthy walk away from it all

wattle – Australian acacia species with furry yellow flowers

Wet, the – wet season in northern Australia

yabbie – freshwater crayfish

yum cha – classic southern Chinese dumpling feast

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