

Sydney



At the heart of Sydney – Australia’s oldest, largest and most diverse city – is the outrageously good-looking Sydney Harbour. Like a psychedelic supermodel, the city curves and sways through this glamorous maze of sandstone headlands, lazy bays and legendary surf beaches. The Sydney experience is essentially physical – dunk yourself in the Bondi surf, sail under the Harbour Bridge on a yacht, jog along the Coogee cliff tops or rampage through Centennial Park on horseback. Everybody seems to be outside – the beaches are swarming, street cafés buzz and the harbour blooms with sails.

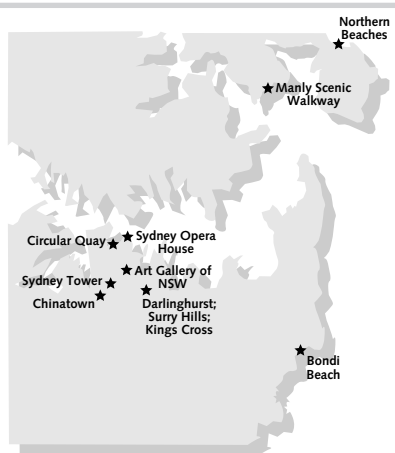
Jealous as hell, the rest of Australia stereotypes Sydney as more body-beautiful than bookish, more *carpe diem* than museum – a narcissistic ‘Sin City’ fixated on sunglasses, salons and soy lattes. Sure, there’s a lot of blonde dye in Bondi, but the genetic legacy of the British and Irish convicts who built Sydney is more evident in gutsy self-belief than anything mirror-worthy.

Sydney is no less complex socially than it is on the map. An edgy multiculturalism ignites the food scene and fuels the nocturnal life – you’ll lose yourself in the restaurants, bars and clubs just as easily as on the streets. Aboriginal heritage makes an impact through art; you’ll see many urban galleries celebrating indigenous culture.

Whether it’s the launching pad or the final fling of your New South Wales adventure, your Sydney days will be active and engaging, your nights indulgent and intense. The rest of Australia is in denial – Sydney is as good as it gets.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Carve up the surf at **Bondi Beach** (p61) or the **Northern Beaches** (p64)
- Enjoy fresh seafood, divine Australian wine and harbour hubbub at a **Circular Quay restaurant** (p91)
- Catch a show and ogle the architecture at the **Sydney Opera House** (p54)
- Check out the stunning indigenous art at the **Art Gallery of New South Wales** (p59)
- Engage your senses: sights, sounds, smells, tastes and textures in **Chinatown** (p56)
- Forget you’re in the middle of a huge city on the bushy **Manly Scenic Walkway** (p66)
- Soar up **Sydney Tower** (p58) for jaw-dropping 360-degree views
- Get wobbly at the **bars and pubs** (p95) around Darlinghurst, Surry Hills and Kings Cross



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 02

■ POPULATION: 4,444,500

■ AREA: 12,407 SQ KM

HISTORY

The Sydney region is the ancestral home of the Eora people (the Ku-ring-gai, Birrabirragal and Cadi tribes) who possessed an intimate understanding of environmental sustainability, spoke three distinct languages and maintained sophisticated sacred and artistic cultures. In 1788 Captain Arthur Phillip established Australia’s first European settlement at Sydney Cove, today’s Circular Quay. In a typically ugly pattern of European colonisation, the Eora were stripped of legal rights to their land and were systematically incarcerated, killed or driven away by force – many more succumbed to introduced European diseases.

Early Sydney bumbled through near-starvation and rum-fuelled political turmoil, but things didn’t boom until the 1850s gold rush put a rocket under the economy. Sydney’s population doubled in a decade.

In the 20th century, post-WWII immigrants from the UK, Ireland and the Mediterranean brought spirit and prosperity to Sydney. American GIs swarmed into Sydney during the Vietnam War, changing the city’s face yet again. Hosting the 2000 Olympic Games thrust Sydney into the global limelight, and the city wasn’t shy about stepping onto the stage.

Simmering racial tensions exploded into mob violence on Sydney’s southern beaches in late 2005 – an ugly development that remains unresolvedly snagged in the city’s social conscience.

ORIENTATION

Central Sydney grips Sydney Harbour (Port Jackson) in a passionate embrace, while Greater Sydney covers more than 1200 sq km from Botany Bay to the south, the Blue Mountains to the west and Pittwater to the north. The harbour runs east–west, dividing the city in two – the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Harbour Tunnel connect the south and north shores. The city centre and most of the action are south of the harbour. Sydney’s Kingsford Smith Airport is 10km south of the city centre, jutting into Botany Bay.

The Central Business District (CBD) is long and narrow, stretching from The Rocks and Circular Quay in the north to Central Station in the south, bounded by Darling Harbour and Chinatown to the west, and funky inner-city suburbs Darlinghurst, Surry Hills, Kings Cross and Paddington to the east.

Further east are the affluent Eastern Suburbs, reaching from Woollahra to Watsons Bay. To the southeast is Bondi, Sydney’s quintessential ocean suburb. The Eastern Beaches track south from here: Tamarama, Bronte, Coogee, Maroubra and Cronulla.

The Inner West includes the rejuvenated once-were-warehouse suburbs Ultimo and Pyrmont, bohemian Glebe, picture-perfect Balmain, Italian-flavoured Leichhardt and grungy Newtown.

The suburbs north of the bridge are known as the North Shore, the jewel of which is affable, beachy Manly. The magnificent Northern Beaches stretch north from here – 30km of sandy suburbs, rocky headlands and iconic surf beaches.

Maps

Lonely Planet’s *Sydney City Map* has detailed coverage of central Sydney and the Blue Mountains. If you’re driving around the city, a *Sydney UBD* street directory (around \$35) is invaluable.

Department of Lands (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9236 7720; www.lands.nsw.gov.au; 1 Prince Albert Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Topographic map heaven.

Map World (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9261 3601; www.mapworld.com.au; 280 Pitt St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3.45pm Sat) Maps, atlases, GPS and travel guides.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Ariel (Map p84; ☎ 9332 4581; www.arielbooks.com.au; 42 Oxford St, Paddington; ☎ 9am-midnight) Art, film, fashion, design and travel guides.

Dymocks (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9235 0155; www.dymocks.com.au; 424-28 George St; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 6pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) Mainstream titles, stationery and a café.

Gleebooks (Map p86; ☎ 9660 2333; www.gleebooks.com.au; 49 Glebe Point Rd, Glebe; ☎ 9am-9pm) Sydney’s best bookshop – politics, arts and fiction.

Kinokuniya (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9262 7996; www.kinokuniya.com; Level 2, The Galleries Victoria, 500 George St; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 6pm Sun) Over 300,000 titles – Sydney’s biggest bookshop.

Travel Bookshop (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9261 8200; www.travelbooks.com.au; 175 Liverpool St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) Crammed with, you guessed it, travel books.

Emergency

Lifeline (☎ 13 11 14; www.lifeline.com.au) Over-the-phone counselling services, including suicide prevention.

National Roads & Motorists Association (NRMA; Map pp78-9; ☎ 13 21 32; www.nrma.com.au; 74-6 King St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Car insurance and roadside service.
Police (☎ 000) Central Sydney (Map pp78-9; 192 Day St, Sydney); Kings Cross (1-15 Elizabeth Bay Rd, Kings Cross); The Rocks (132 George St, The Rocks)
Rape Crisis Centre (☎ 9515 6111, 1800 424 017)

Internet Access

Global Gossip Bondi (37 Hall St, Bondi); Central Station (760 George St, Sydney); City Centre (415 Pitt St, Sydney); Kings Cross (Map p82; ☎ 9326 9777; 61 Darlinghurst Rd, Kings Cross; per hr \$2; ☎ 9am-midnight) Traveller-friendly chain.
Internet World (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9262 9700; 369 Pitt St, Sydney; per hr \$2; ☎ 24hr) Fast servers and commercial FM beneath medicinal fluoro light.

Medical Services

Kings Cross Travellers Clinic (Map p82; ☎ 9358 3066; www.travellersclinic.com.au; 13 Springfield Ave, Kings Cross; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat) General medical, dive medicals and morning-after pill scripts; bookings advised.
St Vincents Hospital (Map p82; ☎ 8382 7111; www.svh.stvincents.com.au; cnr Victoria & Burton Sts, Darlinghurst; ☎ 24hr emergency)
Sydney Hospital & Sydney Eye Hospital (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9382 7111; www.sesahs.nsw.gov.au/syd hosp; 8 Macquarie St, Sydney; ☎ 24hr emergency)
Travel Doctor (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9221 7133; www.traveldoctor.com.au; Level 7, 428 George St, Sydney; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Wed & Fri, to 8pm Thu, 9am-12.30pm Sat) Travel shots and medical advice.

Money

There are plenty of ATMs throughout Sydney; both **American Express** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 1300 139 060; 105 Pitt St, Sydney; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) and **Traveler** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9231 2523; 175 Pitt St, Sydney; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) have city branches. Seven-day exchange bureaus include:
Central Station (Map pp78-9; Coach Terminal; ☎ 9am-4pm)
Circular Quay (Map pp78-9; Wharf 6; ☎ 8am-9.30pm)
Kings Cross (Map p82; cnr Springfield Ave & Darlinghurst Rd; ☎ 8am-midnight)

Post

Stamps are sold at post offices, Australia Post retail outlets in most suburbs and most newsagencies.
General Post Office (GPO; Map pp78-9; ☎ 13 13 18; www.auspost.com.au; 1 Martin Place; ☎ 8.15am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat)

Poste Restante Service (Map pp78-9; ☎ 13 13 18; www.auspost.com.au; 310 George St; ☎ 8.15am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Bring identification to collect mail.

Tourist Information

City Host Information Kiosks (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9am-5pm winter, 10am-6pm summer) Circular Quay (cnr Pitt & Alfred Sts); Martin Place (btwn Elizabeth & Castlereagh Sts); Town Hall (cnr Druiitt & George Sts)
Sydney Visitor Centres The Rocks (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9240 8788; www.sydneyvisitorcentre.com; cnr Argyle & Playfair Sts; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm); Darling Harbour (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9240 8788; www.sydneyvisitorcentre.com; 33 Wheat Rd; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm) Super comprehensive; also acts as an accommodation agency.
Tourism NSW Sydney (☎ 13 20 77; www.visitnsw.com.au; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri); Airport (☎ 9667 6050; International Arrivals, Terminal 1; ☎ 5am-11pm) State-wide accommodation and travel advice.
Tourist Information Service (☎ 9669 5111; ☎ 7am-10pm) Sydney-centric information and accommodation.
Travellers' Information Service (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9281 9366; sydneycoach@optusnet.com.au; Sydney Coach Terminal, Eddy Ave; ☎ 6am-10.30pm) Helpful, busy office handling accommodation bookings, coach tickets, public transport information and maps.

SIGHTS

Sydney Harbour

Stretching 20km inland to the mouth of the Parramatta River, Sydney Harbour (aka Port Jackson) is Sydney's shimmering soul, its beaches, coves, bays, islands and waterside parks providing crucial relief from the ordeals of urban life. Crisscrossed by ferries and carpeted by weekend yachts, it's both the city's playground and a major port.

Forming the gateway to the harbour are **North Head** (Map pp76-7) and **South Head** (Map pp76-7). **Watsons Bay** (Map pp76-7) nestles on South Head's harbour side, fostering a salty cottage atmosphere. The **harbour beaches** are generally sheltered, calm coves with little of the frenzied foam of the ocean beaches. On the south shore is **Camp Cove** (Map pp76-7), a photogenic swimming beach where Arthur Phillip first landed, and the shark-netted **Shark Bay** (Map pp76-7). On the North Shore (Map pp76-7) try **Manly Cove**, **Reef Beach**, **Clontarf**, **Chinamans Beach** and **Balmoral**.

SYDNEY HARBOUR NATIONAL PARK

This park protects scattered pockets of harbourside bushland with magical walking

tracks (see Manly Scenic Walkway, p66), lookouts, Aboriginal engravings and historic sites. Its southern side incorporates South Head and Nielsen Park; on the North Shore it includes North Head, Dobroyd Head, Middle Head and Ashton Park.

Five harbour islands are also part of the Sydney Harbour National Park: **Clark Island** (Map pp76-7) off Darling Point, **Shark Island** (Map pp76-7) off Rose Bay, **Rodd Island** (Map pp76-7) in Iron Cove, **Goat Island** (Map pp78-9), once a hellish convict gulag, and the small fortified **Fort Denison** (Map pp76-7) off Mrs Macquaries Point. Nicknamed 'Pinchgut' for its meagre rations, Fort Denison once isolated recalcitrant convicts. Paranoid fears of a Russian invasion during the mid-19th-century Crimean War led to its fortification.

Except for Goat Island, which is currently off-limits, the harbour islands are open for marooning. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) runs 2½-hour **Fort Denison tours** (adult/concession/family \$22/18/72; ☎ 11.45am Mon-Fri, 11.30am & 2.30pm Sat & Sun) – book at the Sydney Harbour National Park Information Centre at Cadman's Cottage (p54). You'll have to organise your own transport to Rodd and Clark Islands (eg water taxi; p105) which incurs a \$5 landing fee, also payable at Cadman's Cottage. **Matilda Rocket Express** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9264 7377; www.matilda.com.au; adult/concession/family \$16/15/53; ☎ 10.30am, 11.45am, 1.45pm & 3.30pm) rockets you to Shark Island from Circular Quay. The Harbour Trust runs tours to **Cockatoo Island** (Map pp76-7; ☎ 8969 2199; adult/concession/family \$25/15/75; ☎ 10.30am & 1.30pm Sat, 10am & 2pm Sun), the harbour's largest island.

SYDNEY IN...

Two Days

Immerse yourself in history with a ramble through the **Rocks** (p54) to Sydney Cove, continuing past the **Sydney Opera House** (p54) to the chilled-out lawns of the **Royal Botanic Gardens** (p59). Grab a cab to **Bondi Beach** (p61) and hurl yourself into the Pacific, then take in an evening **Opera House show** (p99).

Kick-start your heart on the second day with a **BridgeClimb** (p68) over Sydney Harbour Bridge. Hang with the masters at the **Art Gallery of New South Wales** (p59) or ship yourself out onto the harbour: ride the ferry to **Taronga Zoo** (p62), or to **Manly** (p62) for a surf. Chow down in **Chinatown** (p56) then hit some **Darlinghurst bars** (p95) for a jazzy nightcap.

Four Days

Sleep late, then wield your credit card with abandonment at Paddington's **Oxford St boutiques** (p102). Check out the **Sydney Aquarium** (p57) or scale **Sydney Tower** (p58) in the afternoon. Complete the day at a **Darling Harbour eatery** (p92), then cool your boots in the boardwalk bars.

Start day four with a bracing Bondi swim, eat a cruisy, open-air Sydney breakfast then tackle the awesome **Bondi to Coogee Clifftop Trail** (p66). Bus it back into town then head to **Surry Hills** (p92) for dinner and drinks.

One Week

Cultivate a taste for old-time Sydney refinement with a visit to **Vaucluse House** (p61) or **Elizabeth Bay House** (p60), then undo your high-brow aspirations with a trashy night-on-the-tiles in **Kings Cross** (p59). The next day, a shimmering harbour ferry ride to **Watsons Bay Hotel** (p97) transports you to beer-garden heaven.

Sydney's **weekend markets** (p103) are varied, entertaining and crowded: load up on recycled fashion, multicultural eats and tacky Australiana for the folks back home.

Rock-out to some nocturnal **live music** or cut the rug at some Sydney **clubs**. If all that clash and throb isn't your scene, a day trip to the **Northern Beaches** (p64) will rejuvenate your spirits.

Dinner with a view is essential on your final night – treat yourself to some top-notch **Mod Oz cuisine** at Circular Quay (p91) with icon-festooned views of the Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Sydney Opera House

'The sun did not know how beautiful its light was until it was reflected off this building.' So said famous architect Louis Kahn, aghast with admiration for the **Sydney Opera House** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9250 7111; www.sydneyoperahouse.com; Bennelong Pt, Circular Quay E). Danish architect Jørn Utzon's competition-winning 1956 design is Australia's most recognisable icon and essential sight. It's mused to have drawn inspiration from orange segments, snails, palm fronds and Mayan temples, and poetically likened to a 'nun's scrum' and the sexual congress of turtles. It's architecturally orgasmic from any angle, but the ferry view approaching Circular Quay is hard to beat.

The predicted four-year construction started in 1959, and after a tumultuous tirade of ego clashes, technical difficulties and delays, the Opera House finally opened in 1973. The 67m-high roof features 27,230 tonnes of Swedish tiles (1,056,000 of them). Two thousand four hundred annual events cost over \$40 million to run and keep the Concert Hall organ's 10,500 pipes humming.

There are four main auditoriums for dance, concerts, opera and theatre events, plus the left-of-centre Studio for emerging artists. The acoustics are superb, the internal aesthetics like the belly of a whale. Most events sell out quickly, but 'partial view' tickets are often available on short notice. There's also an Exhibition Hall and an artsy-craftsy Sunday Market on the concourse. The bimonthly *Events Diary* details forthcoming performances and is available free inside. The Kids At The House programme features kids' music, dance and drama including the Babies' Proms Orchestra (orchestral nursery rhyme and picture-book accompaniment) and introductory ballet with Australian Ballet dancers.

Get your tickets at the **box office** (☎ 9250 7777; ☎ 9am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 2hrs pre-show Sun). Kids under five aren't admitted to most performances, so check before you book.

Opera House **tours** (☎ 9250 7250; adult/concession \$23/16; ☎ 1hr tours 9am-5pm) take you from 'front of house' to backstage. Due to rehearsals, not every tour can visit every theatre, but you're more likely to see everything if you arrive early. Let them know in advance if you require wheelchair access.

Disabled access to the theatres is pretty good, but some areas require staff assistance; call ☎ 9250 7250 for details. Public transport

to Circular Quay is the best way to get here, but if you're driving there's a **car park** (☎ 9247 7599; enter via Macquarie St; nightly rate \$25; ☎ 6.30am-1.00am) under the building.

The Rocks

The site of Sydney's first European settlement, the Rocks, has evolved unrecognisably from its squalid, overcrowded origins. Residents once sloshed through open sewers and alleyways festered with disease, prostitution and drunken lawlessness. Sailors, whalers and rascals boozed and brawled shamelessly in countless harbourside pubs.

The Rocks remained a commercial and maritime hub until shipping services left Circular Quay in the late 1800s. A bubonic plague outbreak in 1900 continued the decline. Construction of the Harbour Bridge in the '20s brought further demolition, entire streets disappearing under the bridge's southern approach.

It wasn't until the 1970s that The Rocks' cultural and architectural heritage was recognised. The ensuing redevelopment has saved a lot of old buildings but has turned the area into a sanitised, 'olde world' tourist trap. Kitsch cafés and tourist shops hocking stuffed koalas and Opera House key rings now prevail.

Cadman's Cottage (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9247 5033; www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au; 110 George St; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4.30pm Sat & Sun), built on a buried beach, is Sydney's oldest house (1816). Namesake John Cadman was government coxswain. Water police detained criminals here in the 1840s; it was later converted into a home for retired sea captains. Further along George St is the weekend **Rocks Market** (p103).

The excellent new **Rocks Discovery Museum** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 1800 067 676; www.rocksdiscovery.museum.com; 2-8 Kendall La; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm) digs deep into artefact-soaked Rocks history and provides a sensitive insight into the lives of the Cadigal people, The Rocks' original inhabitants.

Beyond the **Argyle Cut** (Map pp78-9), an impressive tunnel excavated by convicts, is Millers Point, a relaxed district of early colonial homes. **Argyle Place** (Map pp78-9) is an English-style village green on which any Australian has the legal right to graze livestock. Overlooking it is **Garrison Church** (Map pp78-9), Australia's oldest church

(1848). Nearby the Lord Nelson Brewery Hotel and the **Hero of Waterloo Hotel** (Map pp78-9) jostle for supreme respect as Australia's oldest pub.

The 1850s, copper-domed, Italianate **Sydney Observatory** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9217 0485; www.sydneyobservatory.com.au; Watson Rd; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm) sits atop Observatory Park. Inside there's a **3-D Space Theatre** (adult/child/family \$6/4/16; ☎ 2.30pm & 3.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am, noon, 2.30pm & 3.30pm Sat & Sun) and an interactive Australian astronomy exhibition. Squint at galaxies far, far away during Night Viewings (tickets for adult/child/family cost \$15/12/40); bookings are required. In the old military hospital building nearby, the **SH Ervin Gallery** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9258 0173; www.nsw.nationaltrust.org.au/ervin.html; Watson Rd; adult/child \$6/4 ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun) exhibits Australian art, including the annual *Salon des Refusés* collection of alternative Archibald Prize entries.

The wharves around Dawes Point are rapidly emerging from prolonged decay. Walsh Bay's Pier 4 houses the renowned Sydney Theatre Company (p101), Bangarra Dance Company, **Australian Theatre for Young People** (ATYP; Map pp78-9) and Sydney Dance Company. The impressive Sydney Theatre (p101) is across the road.

Sydney Harbour Bridge

Whether they're driving over it, climbing up it, rollerblading across it or sailing under it, Sydneysiders adore their bridge. Dubbed the 'old coat hanger', it's a spookily big object – moving around Sydney you'll catch sight of it in the corner of your eye and get a fright! The bridge links the CBD with the North Sydney business district, spanning the harbour at one of its narrowest points. Completed in 1932 at a cost of \$20 million, the city took 60 years to pay it off.

The best way to experience the bridge is on foot – don't expect much of a view crossing by car or train. Staircases climb up to the bridge from both shores leading to a footpath running the length of the eastern side. A cycle way wheels along the western side. You can climb the southeastern pylon to the **Pylon Lookout** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9240 1100; www.pylonlookout.com.au; adult/concession \$8/3; ☎ 10am-5pm), or ascend the great arc on a BridgeClimb (p68).

Circular Quay

Circular Quay, built around Sydney Cove, is Sydney's public transport hub, with ferry

quays, bus stops, a train station and the **Overseas Passenger Terminal**. (Map pp78-9). European settlement grew around the Tank Stream, which now trickles underground into the harbour near Wharf 6. For many years Circular Quay was also Sydney's port, but these days it's more of a recreational space, with harbour walkways, grassy verges, outstanding restaurants, fisherfolk and buskers of unpredictable merit.

Emerging phoenix-like from extensive renovations, the cavernous 1885 **Customs House** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9242 8555; www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov/library; 31 Alfred St; admission free; ☎ 8am-midnight Mon-Fri, 10am-midnight Sat, noon-5pm Sun; library 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun) houses the Customs House Library. Under the glass floor of the foyer is a geeky (but undeniably impressive) 1:500 model of Sydney. If you feel like a stylish lunch with a view, take the elevator up to Café Sydney on the top floor (☎ 9251 8683).

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Always challenging, the **MCA** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9245 2400; www.mca.com.au; 140 George St; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm) fronts Circular Quay West in a stately Art Deco building and has been raising even the most open-minded Sydney eyebrows since 1991. Its constantly changing, controversial exhibitions from Australia and overseas range from incredibly hip to in-your-face, sexually explicit and profoundly disturbing.

Macquarie Place Area

Narrow lanes lead south from Circular Quay towards the city centre. At the corner of Loftus and Bridge Sts is **Macquarie Place**. (Map pp78-9) a leafy public square proudly displaying a cannon and anchor from the First Fleet flagship, HMS *Sirius*, and an 1818 obelisk etched with road distances to various points in the nascent colony.

Inside the old Water Police Station (1858) nearby, the **Justice & Police Museum** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9252 1144; www.hht.net.au; cnr Albert & Phillip Sts; adult/child/family \$8/4/17 ☎ 10am-5pm Sat & Sun, daily in Jan) zooms in on disreputable activities, with exhibits of confiscated weapons, butt-ugly mugshots and forensic evidence from Sydney's most heinous crimes.

MUSEUM OF SYDNEY

This thoroughly engaging **museum** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9251 5988; www.hht.net.au; cnr Bridge & Phillip Sts;

DISCOUNT SYDNEY SIGHTSEEING

The Historic Houses Trust's **Ticket Through Time** (☎ 8239 2288; www.hht.net.au/visit/admission_prices; adult/child/family \$30/15/60) gets you into all 11 of the HHT's houses and museums in the Sydney area, including Vaulse House (p61), Government House (p58), Elizabeth Bay House (p60), Justice & Police Museum (p55), Museum of Sydney (p55) and Hyde Park Barracks Museum (p58). Visit four or more of these and you'll save yourself some hard-earned cash.

Alternatively, the **See Sydney & Beyond Card** (☎ 1300 661 711; www.seesydneycard.com) offers admission to a wide range of Sydney's attractions including sightseeing tours, harbour cruises, museums, historic buildings and wildlife parks. Prices for one/two/three/seven-day cards are adult \$65/119/149/209, child \$45/65/79/139. The two/three/seven-day cards are also available with public transport included for adult \$159/205/275, child \$85/109/175. Cards are available online or at the Sydney Visitor Centres (p52).

adult/child/family \$10/5/20 (🕒 9.30am-5pm) is east of Macquarie Place, on the site of Sydney's first (and infamously pungent) Government House (1788). The city's early history (including pre-1788) comes to life here through whispers, arguments, gossip, artefacts and state-of-the-art installations. There's also a damn fine café on-site.

City Centre

Central Sydney stretches from Circular Quay in the north to Central Station in the south. The business hub is towards the northern end, but the southern end is being redeveloped, gradually shifting the city's focus. For a lofty city view, take a trip up Sydney Tower (p58).

Sydney lacks a true civic centre, but **Martin Place** (Map pp78-9) comes close. This grand pedestrian mall extends from Macquarie St to George St, lined by monumental financial buildings and the Victorian colonnaded General Post Office. There's a cenotaph commemorating Australia's war dead, an amphitheatre for lunchtime entertainment and plenty of places to sit and watch the crowds. Security guards fight a losing battle against the skateboarders on weekends.

Sydney's 1874 **Town Hall** (Map pp78-9) is a few blocks south of here on the corner of George and Druiitt Sts. The elaborate chamber room and concert hall inside match the fabulously ornate exterior. Next door, the Anglican **St Andrew's Cathedral** (Map pp78-9), built around the same time, is Australia's oldest cathedral. Next to St Andrew's, taking up an entire city block, the high-Victorian Queen Victoria Building (p103) is Sydney's most sumptuous shopping complex. Running a close second is the entirely over-the-top

Strand Arcade (p103) between Pitt St Mall and George St.

There are 45-minute group and self-guided tours of the lavish **State Theatre** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9373 6862; www.statetheatre.com.au; 49 Market St; adult/child \$12/8; 🕒 11.30am-3pm Mon-Fri), built in 1929. Even a quick peek at the glittering foyer is worthwhile.

Breathing life into the city's lacklustre southwestern zone are Sydney's teeny Spanish Quarter (Map pp78-9) and thriving **Chinatown** (Map pp78-9), a tight nest of restaurants, shops and aroma-filled alleyways around Dixon St. Chinatown goes berserk during Chinese New Year in late January/early February - streets throng with sideshows, digitally accompanied musicians and stalls selling everything from good-luck tokens to black-sesame ice-cream burgers (seeing jaunty, fire-breathing paper dragons after eating these is not a hallucinogenic effect).

Darling Harbour

This rambling, purpose-built, waterfront tourist park lining Cockle Bay on the city's western edge was once industrial docklands with factories, warehouses and shipyards. These days, the official spiel promotes more leisurely industry: 'Darling Harbour - Play It Your Way!'

Dotted between an architectural spoil of flyovers, fountains, sculptures and sailcloth are some great museums and sights, a plethora of harbour cruise outlets and the overrated Harbourside Shopping Centre. The snazzy **Cockle Bay Wharf** (Map pp78-9) and **King Street Wharf** (Map pp78-9) precincts contain a dangerous array of cafés, bars and restaurants for when you're all museumed-out. Don't forget the harbour itself - below the flocks

of tourists and belligerent ibises, it remains unflappably calm.

A stroll across **Pymont Bridge** (Map pp78-9), the world's first electric swing bridge, leads you into Pymont, home of the Sydney Fish Market (right) and the playground of bigger fish, **Star City Casino** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9657 8694; www.starcity.com.au; 80 Pymont St, Pymont; 🕒 24hr).

Darling Harbour and Pymont are serviced by ferry, Monorail, Metro Light Rail (MLR) and the Sydney Explorer bus. A dinky **people-mover train** (adult/child \$3.50/2.50; 🕒 10am-6pm) connects the sights; the visitors centre (p52) is underneath the highway, next to the Imax cinema. The free Darling Harbour Jazz Festival happens in June.

SYDNEY AQUARIUM

Visitors wander goggle-eyed through underwater glass tubes at this ever-popular **aquarium** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 8251 7800; www.sydneyaquarium.com.au; Aquarium Pier; adult/child/family \$27/14/65; 🕒 9am-10pm; last admission 9pm), celebrating the richness of Australian marine life. Three 'oceanariums' are moored in the harbour: sharks, rays and humungous fish in one; Sydney Harbour marine life and seals in the other two. Don't miss the Van Gogh colours of the Great Barrier Reef exhibit, platypuses and crocodiles at the Southern and Northern Rivers exhibits, and the fairy penguins in the Southern Oceans section. Arrive early to beat the crowds and fully appreciate the piped indigestive whale music.

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

Beneath an Utzon-like roof, this thematic **museum** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9298 3777; www.anmm.gov.au; 2 Murray St; admission free, special exhibits adult/child/family from \$10/6/20; 🕒 9.30am-5pm) examines Australia's inextricable relationship with the sea. Exhibitions range from Aboriginal canoes to surf culture and the Navy. You can almost taste the salt... There's good disabled access to the museum, but not to the boats moored out the front. Regular guided tours are available.

POWERHOUSE MUSEUM

This hip and progressive **museum** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9217 0100; www.powerhousemuseum.com; 500 Harris St, Ultimo; standard exhibits adult/child/family \$10/5/25, additional costs for special exhibits; 🕒 10am-5pm) whirrs away inside the former power station for Sydney's defunct tram network. High-voltage

interactive demonstrations wow school groups with the lowdown on how lightning strikes, magnets grab and engines growl. Decorative arts, social history and eclectic exhibitions also get the hands-on treatment.

CHINESE GARDEN OF FRIENDSHIP

Built according to the balanced principles of Yin and Yang, these **gardens** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9281 6863; www.chinesegarden.com.au; adult/child/family \$6/3/15; 🕒 9.30am-5pm) are an oasis of tranquillity in the otherwise hectic Darling Harbour. Designed by architects from Guangzhou (Sydney's sister city) for Australia's 1988 bicentenary, the garden interweaves pavilions, waterfalls, lakes and paths. Savour some tea and cake at the Chinese Teahouse by the lotus pond.

SYDNEY FISH MARKET

With over 15 million kilograms of seafood shipped through here annually, this cavernous, multicultural **fish market** (Map p86; ☎ 9004 1122; www.sydneyfishmarket.com.au; cnr Pymont Bridge Rd & Bank St, Pymont; 🕒 7am-4pm) is the place to introduce yourself to a bewildering array of still-thrashing sub-sea Sydneysiders. Chefs, locals and overfed seagulls haggle over mud crabs, Balmain bugs, lobsters, oysters, mullet, rainbow trout and fat slabs of salmon. There are plenty of fishy restaurants, a deli, wine centre, sushi bar, oyster bar, even a florist. Arrive early to check out the early morning auctions or take a behind-the-scenes **Auction Tour** (\$20; 🕒 7-8.30am Thu) - reservations aren't required, but wear closed-toe shoes. You can also book yourself in for regular seafood cooking classes at the **Sydney Seafood School** (☎ 9004 1111; classes from \$75), or just wander around and enjoy the stinky piscatorial action. The Fish Market is west of Darling Harbour on Blackwattle Bay; the MLR stops outside.

Macquarie Street Area

A crop of early public buildings graces Macquarie St, defining the city's edge from Hyde Park to the Opera House. Many of these buildings were commissioned by Lachlan Macquarie, the first NSW governor to have a vision of Sydney beyond its convict origins. He enlisted convict architect Francis Greenway to help realise his plans.

Two Greenway gems front onto Queens Square at Hyde Park's northern end: **St James Church** (Map pp78-9), Sydney's oldest church, built in 1819, and the **Hyde Park Barracks**

Museum (Map pp78-9; ☎ 8239 2311; www.hht.net.au; adult/child/family \$10/5/20; 🕒 9.30am-5pm), also built in 1819. The barracks functioned as convict quarters for Anglo-Irish sinners (1819-48), an immigrant depot (1848-86) and government courts (1887-1979) before its current incarnation – a window into everyday convict life.

Further down Macquarie St are the deep verandas, formal colonnades and ochre tones of the twin 1816 **Mint** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 8239 2288; www.hht.net.au; admission free; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) and **Parliament House** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9230 2111; www.parliament.nsw.gov.au; admission free; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) buildings, originally wings of the infamous Rum Hospital, which was built by two Sydney merchants in 1816 in return for a monopoly on the rum trade. You can watch the elected representatives outdo each other when parliament sits, or take a guided tour (call for bookings and times). Wheelchair access is available by prior arrangement.

Next to Parliament House, the **State Library of NSW** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9273 1414; www.sl.nsw.gov.au; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) holds over five million tomes, the smallest being a tablet-

sized *Lord's Prayer*, and hosts innovative exhibitions in its **galleries** (🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun). Disabled access is excellent.

At the top of Bridge St, the Sydney Conservatorium of Music (see p99 for musical recital details) was the Greenway-designed stables and servants' quarters for Macquarie's planned Government House. Macquarie was usurped as governor before the house was finished, partly because of the project's extravagance.

Built between 1837 and 1845, the Gothic Revival **Government House** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9931 5222; www.hht.net.au; admission free; 🕒 10am-3pm Fri-Sun, grounds to 4pm daily, 45min tours from 10.30am) is just off Macquarie St in the Royal Botanic Gardens. Unless there's an official event happening, you can tour through the fussy furnishings.

AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM

Not far from Macquarie St, this **natural history museum** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9320 6000; www.amonline.net.au; 6-8 College St; standard exhibits adult/child/family \$10/5/20, additional costs for special exhibits; 🕒 9.30am-5pm) was established just 40 years after the First Fleet dropped anchor. There are excellent

Aboriginal and native wildlife exhibitions, self-guided tours and indigenous performances on Sundays (call for times). Kids get busy in the Skeleton and Search & Discover Galleries. There's excellent wheelchair access.

Art Gallery of New South Wales

The **gallery** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9225 1744; www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au; Art Gallery Rd, The Domain; admission free, varied costs for touring exhibitions; 🕒 10am-5pm Thu-Tue, to 9pm Wed, free guided tours 1pm) plays a prominent and gregarious role in Sydney society. Highlights include outstanding permanent displays of 19th- and 20th-century Australian art, Aboriginal art, 15th- to 19th-century European and Asian art, and blockbuster international exhibitions. The controversial, much-discussed Archibald Prize exhibits here annually – portraits of the famous and not-so-famous bringing out the art critic in everyone.

Kids swarm to GalleryKids Sunday programme (workshops, performances and guided tours with costumed actors). There are also concerts, screenings, courses, celebrity talks and programmes for the deaf and visually impaired. Wheelchair access is good.

Royal Botanic Gardens

The **Royal Botanic Gardens** (RBG; Map pp78-9; ☎ 9231 8111; www.rbg.nsw.gov.au; Mrs Macquaries Rd; admission free; 🕒 7am-sunset) were established in 1816 as the colony's vegetable patch. The attitude here is relaxed – signs say, 'Please walk on the grass. We also invite you to smell the roses, hug the trees, talk to the birds and picnic on the lawns'. Take a **free guided walk** (🕒 10.30am daily & 1pm Mon-Fri), or **Aboriginal Heritage Tour** (☎ 9231 8134; \$20 per person; 🕒 2pm Fri), both departing the Gardens Shop. A trackless train does a circuit if you've outdone yourself.

Highlights include the rose garden, the South Pacific plant collection, the prickly arid garden, the glass pyramid at the **Tropical Centre** (adult/child \$4.20/2.20; 🕒 10am-4pm) and a sinister, swooping bat colony (a murder of bats?). Management periodically tries to oust the bats (they destroy the vegetation), but they just keep hanging around. Actually, calling them bats is a misnomer – they're grey-headed flying foxes (*Pteropus poliocephalus*).

Most RBG paths are wheelchair accessible.

Other Parks & Gardens

The **Domain** (Map pp78-9) is the large grassy area linking the RBG and Hyde Park, pre-

served by Governor Phillip in 1788 for public recreation. The Art Gallery of New South Wales (left) is here, and the lawns host free summer concerts and Carols by Candlelight every Christmas. The unfaillingly eccentric **Speakers' Corner** (🕒 noon-4pm Sun) transpires in front of the art gallery – religious zealots, nutters, political extremists, homophobes, hippies and academics express their earnest opinions.

On the eastern edge of the city centre is the formal **Hyde Park** (Map pp78-9), originally the colony's racetrack and cricket pitch. Swan around the grand avenue of trees, fountains and giant chessboard or check out the **Anzac Memorial** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9267 7668; www.rslnsw.com.au; admission free; 🕒 9am-5pm). The interior dome is studded with one star for each of the 120,000 NSW citizens who served in WWI. The pines near the entrance grew from seeds gathered at Gallipoli.

A Gothic megalith, **St Mary's Cathedral** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9220 0400; www.sydney.catholic.org.au; cnr College St & St Marys Rd; admission free; 🕒 6.45am-6.30pm Sun-Fri, from 9am Sat) overlooks Hyde Park from the east. The first service was held here in 1833, but the massive spires weren't finished until 2000.

On the other side of Hyde Park, the **Great Synagogue** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9267 2477; www.greatsynagogue.org.au; 187a Elizabeth St; adult/child \$5/3; 🕒 tours noon Tue & Thu) dates from 1878. Tours include the AM Rosenblum Museum's artefacts and a video presentation on Jewish beliefs, traditions and history in Australia. Notice is required for wheelchair access.

Sydney's biggest park is **Centennial Park** (Map p84), a grassy 220-hectare expanse filled with folks walking, kicking balls around, cycling, rollerblading, horseriding (p65) and relaxing under trees with their noses buried in books.

Moore Park (Map p84) abuts Centennial Park and contains sports pitches, a public golf course, Fox Film Studios, the Entertainment Quarter, Aussie Stadium and the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG). **Sportspace Tours** (☎ 1300 724737; www.sydneycricketground.com.au; adult/child/family \$25/15/60; 🕒 10am & 1pm Mon-Fri, 10am Sat) runs 1½-hour behind-the-scenes SCG and Aussie Stadium tours.

Kings Cross

Riding high above the CBD under the big Coca-Cola sign (as much a Sydney icon as

THE BEST VIEWS IN TOWN

Sydney is geographically befuddling – a birds-eye view is the best way to understand the land. The **Harbour Bridge** is the obvious vantage point: climb up to the **Pylon Lookout** (p55) or take the **BridgeClimb** (p68).

The **Sydney Tower** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9333 9222; www.sydneytowertoztrek.com.au; 100 Market St; adult/child \$23.50/14; 🕒 9am-10.30pm) is about as high as Sydneysiders get without wings or drugs – the 360-degree 250m-high views to the Blue Mountains, Botany Bay, the harbour and the Pacific are unbeatable. Feeling brave? Fulfill your Luke Skywalker fantasies on a **Skywalk** (☎ 9333 9200; www.skywalk.com.au; adult/child \$129/95; 🕒 9am-10pm) – don a spiffy 'skysuit', shackle yourself to the safety rail and step onto two glass-floored outdoor platforms, 260m above the street. There are two excellent **revolving restaurants** here, after your walk sit and spin above the twinkling harbour city.

On a more terrestrial level, pack a picnic and check out the panoramas from **Mrs Macquaries Point** at the end of the Royal Botanic Gardens, or from **Observatory Hill** in Millers Point. On the North Shore, **Blues Point Reserve** and **Bradleys Head** are a couple of tasty vantage points. Near Kings Cross, the northern end of Victoria St in **Potts Point** opens out to the cityscape and its classic icons; it's a pretty spot, especially at night.

Sydney's stupendous setting also offers some kickin' combinations of vistas and victuals. If you're looking to impress someone, try these classy restaurants with sassy views:

- **Bondi Social** (Map p87; ☎ 9365 1788; 1st fl, 38 Campbell Pde, Bondi; mains \$10-26; 🕒 lunch Fri-Sun, dinner daily) Mod Oz, cocktails and famous beach views.
- **Forty One** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9221 2500; 42nd fl, Chifley Tower, 2 Chifley Sq; mains from \$39; 🕒 lunch Tue-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) Luxury dining; harbour sights and lights.
- **Summit** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9247 9777; 47th fl, Australia Sq, 264 George St; mains \$32-39; 🕒 lunch Sun-Fri, dinner daily) Revolving vistas, great food and retro-cool interiors.
- **Wharf** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9250 1761; Pier 4, Hickson Rd, Walsh Bay; mains \$27-35; 🕒 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Picture-postcard views, sexy staff and magical Mod Oz.

LA's Hollywood sign), 'The Cross' is a bizarre, densely populated dichotomy of good and evil. Strip joints, tacky tourist shops and backpacker hostels bang heads with classy restaurants, funky bars and gorgeous guesthouses. The Cross retains a sleazy, cannibalistic aura, but the vague sense of menace is more imaginary than real. Sometimes the razzle-dazzle has a sideshow appeal; sometimes walking up Darlinghurst Rd promotes pity. Either way, it's never boring.

In the early 19th century, Kings Cross was mostly grand estates. Terrace houses sprung up in the 1840s; a wine-stained bohemian element moved in during the 1930s. The suburb's reputation for vice congealed during the Vietnam War, when American sailors flooded The Cross with a tide of bawdy debauchery.

The gracious tree-lined streets of neighbouring **Potts Point** (Map p82) and **Elizabeth Bay** (Map p82) feature well-preserved Victorian, Edwardian and Art Deco houses and flats. Built between 1835 and 1839, the neoclassical **Elizabeth Bay House** (Map p82; ☎ 9356 3022; www.hht.net.au; 7 Onslow Ave, Elizabeth Bay; adult/child/family \$8/4/17; ☎ 10am-4.30pm Tue-Sun) was the finest house in the colony. Horrendous 20th-century apartments encircle it, but the exquisite oval salon and stairwell are timeless architectural delights.

Probably the only word in the world with eight 'o's, **Woolloomooloo** (Map p82), down McElhone Stairs (Map p82) from The Cross, was once a slum full of drunks, sailors, and drunk sailors. Things are begrudgingly less pugilistic these days – the pubs are relaxed and the wharf (Map p82) contains some brilliant restaurants. The infamously lowbrow Harry's Café de Wheels (p93) remains. Gulp down a late-night pie and mash.

It's a 15-minute walk to The Cross from the city, or jump on a train. The buses 323-7, 324-5 and 333 from the city also pass through here.

Inner East

The spirited backbone of the Inner East is **Oxford Street** (Map p84), a long string of shops, cafés, bars and clubs that exudes a flamboyance largely attributable to Sydney's gay community. The Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras (p69) gyrates through here every February. **Taylor Square** (Map p84) is gay Sydney's decadent nucleus.

Oxford St runs all the way from Hyde Park to Centennial Park, continuing to Bondi Junction.

Confusingly, street numbers recommence east of South Dowling St, the Darlinghurst–Paddington border. Bus 378 from Railway Square and buses 380, 389 and L82 from Circular Quay run the length of Oxford St.

Wedged between Oxford and William Sts, **Darlinghurst** (see the Darlin' It Hurts boxed text, opposite) is home to the **Sydney Jewish Museum** (Map p82; ☎ 9360 7999; www.sydneyjewishmuseum.com.au; 148 Darlinghurst Rd; adult/child/family \$10/7/22; ☎ 10am-4pm Sun-Thu, to 2pm Fri, closed Jewish holidays), with evocative, powerful exhibits on Australian Jewish history and the Holocaust.

South of Darlinghurst is **Surry Hills** (Map p84), home to a raffish mishmash of inner-city groovers and a swag of good pubs. Once the undisputed centre of Sydney's rag trade and print media, many of its warehouses have been converted to slick apartments. Preserved as a temple to rock 'n' roll artistry, the **Brett Whiteley Studio** (Map p84; ☎ 9225 1881; www.brettwhiteley.org; 2 Raper St; adult/concession \$7/5; ☎ 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) exhibits some of Whiteley's most raucous paintings. Get in early for weekend discussions, performances, readings and workshops. Surry Hills is a short walk east of Central Station or south from Oxford St. Catch buses 301, 302 or 303 from Circular Quay.

Next door to Surry Hills, **Paddington** (Map p84), aka 'Paddo', is an elegant suburb of restored terrace houses on steep leafy streets. Paddington was built for aspiring Victorian artisans, but the lemminglike rush to the outer suburbs after WWII turned it into Australia's worst slum. Renewed passion for Victorian architecture (and the realisation that the outer suburbs were unspeakably boring) fuelled Paddington's 1960s resurgence. By the '90s, real estate was out of reach for all but the lucky and the loaded.

The **Victoria Barracks** (Map p84; ☎ 9339 3170; cnr Oxford St & Greens Rd; tour free, museum adult/child \$2/1; ☎ tour 10am Thu, museum 10am-4pm Thu & Sun, closed Dec-Feb) are a tightly-managed malarial vision from the peak of the British Empire. Thursday's tours of the Georgian buildings take in a flag-raising ceremony, marching band (subject to availability) and the paraphernalia-packed war museum.

The best time to explore Paddington's streets and hibiscus-lined laneways is on Saturdays when the Paddington Market (p103) is pumping. Join the meandering throngs for a foot massage, tarot reading or funky shirt to wear clubbing that night.

DARLIN' IT HURTS *Charles Rawlings-Way*

Smitten with a hooker in his 1986 love/hate classic *Darling It Hurts*, brilliant Aussie songwriter Paul Kelly sang, 'Darlin' it hurts to see you down Darlinghurst tonight'. Kings Cross prostitutes rarely venture into **Darlinghurst** these days – there are too many aspiring cinematographers and scribbling writers wanting to study the action without necessarily getting involved.

Less clichéd in their debauchery than in the past, perhaps, Darlinghursters are still the masters of their own nihilistic, pill-popping universe. On Victoria St one winter Wednesday afternoon, I overheard one of three hedonistic, noir young artisans say to the others, 'Fuck I'm hung-over... Let's go somewhere and drink heaps of coffee.' The end may well be nigh, and to paraphrase Jim Morrison, Darlinghurst is getting its kicks before the whole shithouse goes up in flames.

Near Moore Park, much of the former Sydney Showrooms has been converted into the private Fox Studios and the **Entertainment Quarter** (Map p84; ☎ 9383 4333; www.entertainmentquarter.com.au; ☎ 10am-late), which some claim is only a 'quarter entertaining'. Jokes aside, the cinemas, bowling alley, shops, bars and restaurants aren't a bad way to spend an afternoon.

Eastern Suburbs

Handsome **Rushcutters Bay** (Map p82) is a five-minute walk east of Kings Cross; its harbourside park is a great spot for cooped-up travellers to stretch their legs. The Eastern Suburbs extend east from here – a shimmering, conservative conglomeration of Range Rovers, skinny models and mortgage madness. The harbour-hugging New South Head Rd passes through **Double Bay** (Map p84) and **Rose Bay** (Map pp76-7) then climbs east into **Vaucluse** (Map pp76-7).

An imposing, turreted specimen of Gothic Australiana, **Vaucluse House** (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9388 7922; www.hht.net.au; Wentworth Rd, Vaucluse; adult/child/family \$8/4/17; ☎ 10am-4.30pm Tue-Sun) is Sydney's last remaining 19th-century harbourside estate. Explorer and political sabre-rattler William Charles Wentworth lived here from 1828 to 1862. The Bondi Explorer bus (p68) stops outside.

At the entrance to Sydney Harbour is **Watsons Bay** (Map pp76-7), a snug community with restored fisherman's cottages, a palm-lined park and a couple of nautical churches. From here, follow the harbour around curio-infested South Head, which has awesome views across the harbour entrance to North and Middle Head. On Watson Bay's ocean-side is the **Gap** (Map pp76-7) – an epic cliff top lookout where sunrises, sunsets, canoo-

dling and suicide leaps transpire with similar frequency.

Buses 324 and 325 from Circular Quay service the Eastern Suburbs via Kings Cross. Grab a seat on the left heading east to snare the best views.

Eastern Beaches

Definitely Sydney, **Bondi** (Map p87) is one of the world's great beaches – ocean and land collide, the Pacific arrives in great foaming swells, and all people are equal, as democratic as sand. It's the closest ocean beach to the city centre, has consistently good (though crowded) waves and is great for a rough 'n' tumble swim. The suburb itself has a unique atmosphere due to its mix of old Jewish and other European communities, dyed-in-the-wool Aussies, New Zealanders who never went home, working travellers and the *seriously* good-looking.

Most of the pubs, bars and restaurants are set back from the beach along Campbell Pde (Map p87) and Hall St (Map p87). Nearby is Sunday's Bondi Markets (p103), and there are some Eora **Aboriginal rock engravings** (Map p87) north of the beach near the cliffs at the Bondi Golf Club – the name 'Bondi' derives from an Aboriginal word for the sound of the surf.

Catch bus 380, 389, L82 from the city or 381 from Bondi Junction to get to the Bondi. Tracking south from here along the majestic **Bondi to Coogee Clifftop Trail** (p66) are **Tamarama**, **Bronte**, **Clovelly** and **Coogee** beaches. **Maroubra** and **Cronulla** are further south again. For details see the Sydney's Best Beaches boxed text (p63).

Inner West

West of the centre is the higgledy-piggledy peninsula suburb **Balmain** (Map pp76-7). Once a

notoriously rough dockyard neighbourhood, it has been turned into an arty, upper-crust area of restored Victoriana flush with pubs and cafés. Don't miss the Saturday **market** (p103). Catch a ferry from Circular Quay, buses 432–4 from Railway Sq or 441–2 from the Queen Victoria Building (QVB).

Southwest of the city, bohemian **Glebe** (Map p86) nudges up to the University of Sydney. Here you'll find a backstreet Buddhist temple, decent accommodation and countless students cruising café-lined Glebe Point Rd (aromatherapy and crystals galore). Saturday's **market** (p103) overruns Glebe Public School. Glebe is a smoggy 10-minute walk from Central Station along Broadway, or cross Darling Harbour's Pyrmont Bridge then follow Pyrmont Bridge Rd (20 minutes). Buses 431–4 from Millers Point run via George St along Glebe Point Rd. The MLR also services Glebe.

South of Sydney Uni is **Newtown** (Map p86), a melting-pot of social and sexual subcultures, students and home renovators. King St, its relentlessly urban main drag, is full of funky clothes stores, bookshops and cafés. Slowly moving upmarket, Newtown retains an irrepressible dose of grunge and a rockin' live-music scene. Take the train, or buses 422–3, 426 or 428 from Circular Quay to King St.

Southwest of Glebe is predominantly Italian **Leichhardt** (Map pp76–7), increasingly popular with students and yuppies. Norton St is the place for pizza, pasta and slick Mediterranean style. Bus 413 from Wynyard, or 435–8 or 440 from Circular Quay service Leichhardt.

North Shore

On the northern side of the Harbour Bridge is **North Sydney** (Map pp76–7), a high-rise office centre with little to tempt the traveller. **McMahons Point** (Map pp76–7) is a low-key, forgotten suburb below the western side of the bridge. There's a row of cheery alfresco cafés on Blues Point Rd, running down to Blues Point Reserve on Lavender Bay. At the end of Kirribilli Point, just east of the bridge, are **Admiralty House** (Map pp76–7) and **Kirribilli House** (Map pp76–7), the Sydney residences of the Governor General and Prime Minister respectively.

On the eastern shore of Lavender Bay is **Luna Park** (Map pp76–7; ☎ 9922 6644; www.lunaparksydney.com; 1 Olympic Pl, Milsons Point; admission free, multi-ride passes from \$18; 🕒 10am–10pm Sun–Thu, 10am–

midnight Fri & Sat), with its sinister chip-toothed clown entry. It has been periodically closed by noise police in recent decades, but for the moment the Ferris Wheel, Rotor, Flying Saucer and Tumble Bug still offer varying degrees of nerve-wracking and nausea.

East of here are the upmarket suburbs **Neutral Bay** (Map pp76–7), **Cremorne** (Map pp76–7) and **Mosman** (Map pp76–7), all with coves and harbourside parks perfect for picnics. Ferries from Circular Quay service these suburbs. On the northern side of Mosman is improbably pretty **Balmoral** (Map pp76–7), facing Manly across Middle Harbour. See the Sydney's Best Beaches boxed text for details (opposite).

Taronga Zoo

Haven't spotted any kangaroos bouncing down George St yet? **Taronga Zoo** (Map pp76–7; ☎ 9969 2777; www.zoo.nsw.gov.au; Bradleys Head Rd, Mosman; adult/child/family \$30/16.50/79; 🕒 9am–5pm) houses 4000 kangaroos, koalas, platypuses and similarly hirsute Australians. Feeding sessions and keeper talks happen throughout the day, and **twilight concerts** take place in February and March. Zoo ferries depart Circular Quay's Wharf 2, half-hourly from 7.15am on weekdays, 8.45am Saturday and Sunday. The zoo is really steep, so if you arrive by ferry, take the **Sky Safari** cable car (included in admission) or bus 238 to the top entrance and work your way downhill. The **ZooPass** (p106) includes return ferry rides, Sky Safari and admission. The nightly **Roar & Snore** (☎ 9978 4791; adult/child \$156/105) is an overnight family experience with a night-time safari, barbecue dinner and tents under the stars. Breakfast and behind-the-scenes tours arrive with the dawn.

Manly

Laid-back Manly clings to a narrow isthmus between ocean and harbour beaches near North Head. Surrounded by stuffy harbour enclaves, Manly's shaggy surfers, dusty labourers and relaxed locals are refreshing company. The **Manly Visitors Information Centre** (Map p88; ☎ 9976 1430; www.manlytourism.com; Manly Wharf forecourt; 🕒 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–5pm Sat & Sun) has lots of local info and free pamphlets on the 10km **Manly Scenic Walkway** (p66).

The **Corso** (Map p88) connects Manly's ocean and harbour beaches – surf shops, burger joints, juice bars and lousy cappuccino cafés proliferate. A footpath follows the ocean

SYDNEY'S BEST BEACHES

Sydney's sensational beaches teem with weekend life, but Sydneysiders also swim before, after or instead of going to work. Most beaches are clean, easily accessible and are patrolled by surf lifesavers. Shark patrols operate during summer. Many beaches are topless; a couple are nude – feel free to do as locals do! See below, and also **Bondi** (p61), **Manly** (opposite) and **Northern Beaches** (p64):

Avalon (Map p108) Caught in a sandy '70s time warp, Avalon is the mythical Australian beach you always dreamed of but could never find. The surf's consistent; the relaxed back streets are lined with sleepy cafés and second-hand bookshops. To get here, catch bus L88, 190 or L90 from Wynyard.

Balmoral (Map pp76–7) Split in two by an unfeasibly picturesque rocky outcrop, Balmoral is popular with picnicking North Shore families. Swimmers, kayakers and windsurfers migrate to the shark-netted southern end. Catch bus 175 from Wynyard then 275 from Spit Junction.

Bronte (Map p87) Norfolk Island pines and sandstone headlands encircle the bowl-shaped park behind Bronte, a small family-oriented beach that can get wild and seaweedy. The rock pool is perfect, as are the beachy cafés along the once exceedingly uncool shopping strip. Catch bus 378 from Railway Sq.

Camp Cove (Map pp76–7) When Phillip realised Botany Bay just didn't cut it, he sailed north into Sydney Harbour, his boots sinking into Camp Cove's sand on 21 January 1788. It's a gorgeous golden harbour beach frequented by families and topless beach babes. Catch the ferry to Watsons Bay, or bus L82 or 324–5 from Circular Quay.

Clovelly (Map p87) The concrete terrace skirting along skinny Clovelly bay makes it more pool than beach, but the swell still surges in. A friendly beloved grouper fish lived here for many years until he was speared by a tourist, but there are still groupers to be seen underwater. Bring your snorkel, but don't go killing anything... Catch bus 339.

Coogee (Map p87) Coogee is an Aboriginal word for rotting seaweed, but don't let that deter you. The beach is wide and handsome – room enough for frisbee-throwing backpackers, grommets and groovers alike as low-flying airliners buzz the beach. Catch bus 353 from Bondi Junction, or bus 372–4 or 313–4 from Circular Quay.

Cronulla (Map p108) Cronulla's *loong* surf beach stretches beyond the dunes to the Botany Bay refineries. It's an edgy place with dingy fish-and-chip shops and insomniac teens, the ragged sense of impending 'something' erupting into racial violence in 2005. The '70s cult novel *Puberty Blues* captured the local teen scene. Catch the train to Cronulla.

Dee Why (Map p108) Distorted from *diwai*, an Aboriginal name for a local bird, Dee Why is a no-fuss family beach fronted by chunky apartments, some good cafés and ubiquitous surf shops. Grommets hit the waves and mums hit the rock pool. Catch bus L85, L88, 190 or L90 from Wynyard.

Lady Bay (Map pp76–7) This diminutive, mainly gay nudist beach sits at the bottom of a cliff, on top of which (somewhat ironically) is a Royal Australian Navy facility. To get here, follow the cliff-top walking track from (somewhat ironically) Camp Cove. Catch the ferry to Watsons Bay, or bus L82 or 324–5 from Circular Quay.

Maroubra (Map p108) Maroubra rivals Bondi for size and swell, but its suburban location provides immunity from Bondi's more hectic trappings. The notorious 'Bra Boys' gang remains entrenched in the community psyche, but don't let them keep you out of the surf. Catch buses 376–7, 396 or X77 from Circular Quay, 395 from Railway Sq, or X96 from Elizabeth St.

Palm Beach (Map p108) The northernmost of the Northern Beaches, Palm Beach is a meniscus of bliss. Barrenjoey Lighthouse overlooks free-roaming nudists at the northern end; enduring Australian TV soap *Home & Away* films its treacle-sweet episodes at the sheltered southern end. Catch bus L90 or 190 from Wynyard, or 193 from Avalon.

Shark Bay (Map pp76–7) Despite the name, there's really nothing to worry about – a shark net protects swimmers from becoming something's lunch. It's a family scene, with harbour views and the shady, vaguely spooky-looking Nielsen Park as a backdrop. Catch bus 325 from Circular Quay.

Tamarama (Map p87) Fully deserving its nickname 'Glamarama', Tamarama's deep, sexy gulch attracts the generically gorgeous. Signs say, 'No frisbees, no kites, no ball games'. No fun. Still, if you feel at home here, you're probably not into those kinds of things anyway... Catch bus 361 from Bondi Junction.

shoreline around a small headland to tiny **Fairy Bower Beach** (Map p88) and the picturesque **Shelly Beach** (Map p88). On the harbour side, the refurbished **Manly Wharf** (Map p88) offers cafés, pubs and restaurants. West of here is **Oceanworld** (Map p88; ☎ 8251 7879; www.oceanworld.com.au; W Esplanade; adult/child/family \$18/10/44; ☎ 10am-5.30pm), a daggy-looking '80s aquarium with underwater transparent tubes through which you become alarmingly intimate with 10ft sharks. Not the place to come if you're on the way to Manly Beach for a surf... Next door, the beachy **Manly Art Gallery & Museum** (Map p88; ☎ 9949 1776; www.manly.nsw.gov.au; adult/child \$3.60/1.20; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) focuses on Manly's relationship with the beach.

North Head Scenic Dr provides stunning ocean, harbour and city views. Along this route, the **Manly Quarantine Station** (Map p88; ☎ 9247 5033; www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au; adult/child \$11/7.70; ☎ 1.15pm Thu & Sun, bookings essential) is located, where isolated epidemic-disease carriers dwelt between 1832 and 1984. Ghosts of the dead linger; take the adults-only **Ghost Tour** (\$27.50; ☎ 7.30pm Wed & Fri-Sun) or **Kids' Ghost Walk** (\$13.30; ☎ 6pm Fri).

To get to Manly, catch the ferry or JetCat, bus 169 or E69 from Wynyard, or 151 from the QVB.

Northern Beaches

Sydney's **Northern Beaches** (Map pp76-7; www.sydneynorthernbeaches.com.au) make a low-key, sandy day trip. Extending north from Manly, they form a continuous 30km stretch of laid-back 'burbs, craggy headlands, fish and chip shops and over twenty beaches, finishing at **Palm Beach**. Along the way are **Freshwater, Curl Curl, Dee Why, Collaroy, Narrabeen** and **Warriewood** beaches. More spectacular are **Whale, Avalon** and **Bilgola** beaches, all with dramatic, plummeting headlands. Buses 136 and 139 run from Manly to Dee Why and Curl Curl respectively. Bus L90 runs from Wynyard to Palm Beach. See also the Sydney's Best Beaches boxed text (p63).

ACTIVITIES

Canoeing & Kayaking

Sydney Harbour is the obvious choice for kayaking, but bear in mind that the harbour is both big and busy, especially if you're a novice. Contact the **New South Wales Canoeing Association** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9660 4597; www.nswcanoe

.org.au; Wentworth Park Complex, Wattle St, Ultimo) for canoe course and hire information.

Kayak harbour tours conducted by **Natural Wanders** (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9899 1001; www.kayaksydney.com; per person incl brunch \$110; ☎ 9am-1pm) leave from Lavender Bay Wharf, pass under the bridge to secluded North Shore bays. Bookings are essential; there is an over-15-years-old age limit.

Cycling

Sydney's topography, humidity and drivers can make for a frustrating cycling experience. Centennial Park is popular for pedalling – less traffic, long paths. **Bicycle NSW** (Map p84; ☎ 9281 4099; www.bicyclensw.org.au; Level 5, 822 George St) publishes *Cycling Around Sydney*, which details city routes and paths.

CYCLE HIRE

Many cycle-hire shops also have weekly rates; many require a hefty deposit (about \$500) and/or credit card details.

Cheeky Monkey Cycles (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9212 4460; www.cheekymonkey.com.au; 456 Pitt St; per day \$35; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) Touring specialists with good-quality gear.

Inner City Cycles (Map p86; ☎ 9660 6605; www.innercitycycles.com.au; 151 Glebe Point Rd, Glebe; per day \$33; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Wed & Fri, to 7pm Thu, 9am-4pm Sat, 11am-3pm Sun).

Wooly's Wheels (Map p84; ☎ 9331 2671; www.woolyswheels.com; 82 Oxford St, Paddington; per day \$39; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 8pm Thu, to 4pm Sat & Sun) Quality wheels on Centennial Park's doorstep.

Diving

Sydney's best shore dives are Gordons Bay, north of Coogee; Shark Point, Clovelly; and Ship Rock, Cronulla. Popular boat dive sites are Wedding Cake Island off Coogee, Sydney Heads, and off Royal National Park.

Dive Centre Bondi (Map p87; ☎ 9369 3855; www.divebondi.com.au; 192 Bondi Rd, Bondi; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, from 7.30am Sat & Sun) Four-day PADI courses from \$350; shore & boat dives.

Dive Centre Manly (Map p88; ☎ 9977 4355; www.divesydney.com.au; 10 Belgrave St, Manly; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, from 7.45am Sat & Sun) Learn-to-dive courses from \$345; guided shore dives, weekend boat dives and half-day introductory sessions.

Golf

There are more than 80 golf courses in the metropolitan area, though most are members-

only. Book to play on public courses (especially on weekends).

Bondi Golf Club (Map p87; ☎ 9130 1981; www.bondi.golf.com.au; 5 Military Rd, North Bondi; 18 holes \$18.50; ☎ 7am-sunset Mon-Fri, 12.30pm-sunset Sat & Sun) Spectacular cliff-top public course (9-hole, par 28).

Moore Park Golf Course (Map p84; ☎ 9663 1064; www.mooreparkgolf.com.au; cnr Anzac Pde & Cleveland St; 18 holes Mon-Fri \$45, Sat & Sun \$50; ☎ 6am-10pm) The CBD's closest public course (18-hole, par 70).

Horse Riding

The **Centennial Parklands Equestrian Centre** (Map p84; ☎ 9332 2809; www.cp.nsw.gov.au; Lang Rd, Paddington; per hr ind equipment \$60; ☎ 9am-5pm) conducts one-hour, 3.6km horse rides around treelined Centennial Park, Sydney's favourite urban green space. Several stables conduct rides include the following ones; equine familiarity not required.

Centennial Stables (☎ 9360 5650; www.centennialstables.com.au)

Eastside Riding Academy (☎ 9360 7521; www.eastsideriding.com.au)

Moore Park Stables (☎ 9360 8747; www.mooreparkstables.com.au)

In-line Skating

The Bondi and Manly beach promenades and Centennial Park's pathways are superb for skating.

Manly Blades (Map p88; ☎ 9976 3833; www.manlyblades.com.au; 2/49 North Steyne, Manly; hire per hr from \$15; ☎ 9am-6pm) Top-of-the-range blades, skateboards and safety gear, right across from the beach. Private lessons \$50 per hour.

Rollerblading Sydney (Map pp76-7; ☎ 0411 872 022; www.rollerbladingsydney.com.au; Milsons Point Train Station; ½hr per person \$50-99; ☎ 8am-6pm Sat & Sun, 7-9pm Mon-Fri) Your reassuring instructor sends you barrelling across Sydney Harbour Bridge with lessons, quality skates and protective gear.

Sailing

Sydney has dozens of yacht clubs and sailing schools. Even if you're not a serious sea salt, an introductory lesson is a super way to see the harbour.

Eastails Sailing School (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9327 1166; www.eastsail.com.au; d'Albora Marina, New Beach Rd, Rushcutters Bay; cruises per person from \$95; ☎ 9am-6pm) A sociable outfit with a flotilla of boats. Hoist the mainsail on a morning or afternoon yacht cruise; introductory 'Yachtmaster' courses from \$475.

Sydney by Sail (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9280 1110; www.sydneybysail.com.au; Festival Pontoon, National Maritime

Museum, Darling Harbour; tour \$130, course \$425; ☎ 9am-5pm) Daily harbour sailing tours and comprehensive introductory weekend sailing courses – 12 hours on the water will ensure you're shipshape.

Surfing

On the South Shore, get tubed at Bondi, Tamarama, Coogee, Maroubra and Cronulla. On the North Shore, there are a dozen gnarly surf beaches between Manly and Palm Beach, including Curl Curl, Dee Why, Narrabeen, Mona Vale and Newport.

Aloha Surf (Map p88; ☎ 9977 3777; alohasurfmanly@hotmail.com; 44 Pittwater Rd, Manly; board hire half-/full-day \$20/40; ☎ 9am-6pm) Longboards, shortboards, bodyboards; try your luck at Manly Beach.

Let's Go Surfing (Map p87; ☎ 9365 1800; www.lets.gosurfing.com.au; 128 Ramsgate Ave, Bondi; 2hr lesson incl board & wetsuit adult/child \$75/39; ☎ 9am-7pm) Small-group lessons in the North Bondi swell. Board and wetsuit hire (no lesson) \$30 for two hours. Also at Maroubra.

Manly Surf School (Map p88; ☎ 9977 6977; www.manlysurfschool.com; North Steyne Surf Club, Manly; lessons per hr incl board & wetsuit adult/child \$50/40; ☎ 9am-6pm) Small-group surf lessons in the Manly shore-breaks. Also at Palm Beach and Collaroy.

Swimming

There are 100-plus public swimming pools in Sydney and many beaches have protected rock pools. Harbour beaches offer sheltered and shark-netted (but sometimes soupy) swimming, but nothing beats (or cures a hangover faster than) Pacific Ocean waves. Always swim within the flagged lifeguard-patrolled areas, and never underestimate the surf.

Outdoor city pools include these ones.

Andrew 'Boy' Charlton Pool (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9358 6686; www.abcpool.org; 1C Mrs Macquaries Rd, The Domain; adult/child \$5.20/3.60; ☎ 6am-8pm Sep-Apr) A 50m outdoor saltwater pool named after the 1924 Olympic; five-star amenities and harbour-view café.

Dawn Fraser Baths (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9555 1903; Elkington Park, Glassop St, Balmain; adult/child \$3.40/2; ☎ 7.15am-6.15pm Oct-Nov & Mar-Apr, 6.45am-7pm Dec-Feb) These magnificently restored late-Victorian baths (1884) picturesquely protect swimmers from underwater undesirables.

North Sydney Olympic Pool (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9955 2309; www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au; Alfred St South, Milsons Point; adult/child \$4.90/2.40; ☎ 5.30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 7am-7pm Sat & Sun) Next to Luna Park, right on the harbour.

Tennis

There are hundreds of public tennis courts in Sydney. **Tennis NSW** (☎ 1800 153 040; www.tennisnsw.com.au) lobs up information.

Millers Point Tennis Court (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9256 2222; Kent St, The Rocks; per hr \$25; 🕒 8am-10.30pm) A hard court cut into a leafy sandstone nook.

Parklands Tennis Centre (Map p84; ☎ 9662 7033; www.parklandssportscentre.citysearch.com.au; cnr Anzac Pde & Lang Rd, Moore Park; per hr from \$16.50; 🕒 9am-10pm) Faux-grass and hard courts.

WALKING TOURS

Bondi to Coogee Clifftop Trail

This beautiful coastal walk leads south from Bondi Beach along the cliff-tops to Coogee via Clovelly, Tamarama and Bronte beaches, interweaving panoramic views, swimming spots and foody delights.

Begin at the Eora **Aboriginal rock engravings** (1) between the tower and the cliffs at Bondi Golf Club. Some decades ago they were bizarrely 're-grooved' by the well-meaning but insensitive local council. March south along Military Rd, left into Ramsgate Ave and taste the sea spray at the **lookout** (2). The trail then runs along the rocks to the beach – if the surf's humungous, stay high and dry on Ramsgate Ave. Have a quick dip then rummage through Sunday's funky **Bondi Beach Market** (3; p103), or stick your head into **Bondi Pavilion** (4) for an exhibition or performance.

Grab a bite, a bikini or some surfboard wax on **Campbell Parade** (5) then promenade along the beach to Notts Ave and the glistening **Bondi Icebergs** (6; p94) pool and restaurant. Step onto the cliff path at the end of Notts Ave – the blustery sandstone cliffs and grinding Pacific Ocean couldn't be more spectacular (watch for dolphins, whales and surfers). Slide past sexpot **Tamarama Beach** (7; p63) to **Bronte Beach** (8; p63) where beachy cafés will bolster you.

Continue past the **Bronte Baths** (9) through the sun-bleached **Waverley Cemetery** (10) where writer Henry Lawson and cricketer Victor Trumper are among the subterranean. Duck into the sunbaked **Clovelly Bowling Club** (11) for a beer or a game of bowls, then breeze past the cockatoos, banksias and canoodling lovers in Burrows Park and Bundock Park to **Clovelly Beach** (12; p63).

Follow the footpath up through the car park, along Cliffbrook Pde then down the steps to the upturned dinghies lining **Gor-**

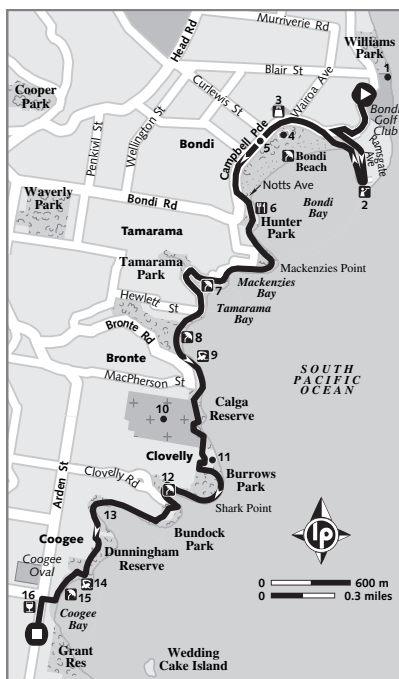
WALK FACTS

Start bus 380 or 389 from Circular Quay to North Bondi

Finish bus 372-4 or 313-4 from Coogee to Circular Quay

Distance 5km

Duration 2-3 hours



dons Bay (13). The trail continues through Dunningham Reserve to **Giles Baths** (14), then lands you smack-bang on glorious **Coogee Beach** (15; p63). Swagger into the **Coogee Bay Hotel** (16; p97) and toast your efforts with a cold lager.

Manly Scenic Walkway

This epic walk tracks west from Manly around North and Middle Harbour, past waterside mansions, harbour viewpoints and through rugged Sydney Harbour National Park (wear sturdy shoes!). Take water and grab a snack before you leave Manly. At times you'll feel completely isolated in bushland – it's easy to forget you're right in the middle of Sydney!

Check the surf at **Manly Beach** (1) then cruise down The Corso to **Oceanworld** (2; p64) on West Esplanade. Scan the view through The Heads from **Fairlight** (3) and the yachts tugging on their moorings near **Forty Baskets Beach** (4). Cackling kookaburras mock you as you enter the **Sydney Harbour National Park** (5) and approach **Reef Beach** (6). The track becomes steep, sandy and rocky further into the park – look for wildflowers, fat goannas sunning themselves and spiders in bottlebrush trees. The views from **Dobroyd Head** (7) are unforgettable. Check out the **deserted 1930s sea shanties** (8) at the base of Crater Cove cliff, and **Aboriginal rock carvings** (9) on an unsigned ledge left of the track before the **Grotto Point Lighthouse** (10)

WALK FACTS

Start ferry to Manly, bus 151 from the QVB, or 169 or E69 from Wynyard

Finish bus 151, 169 or E69 from The Spit to the city

Distance 10km

Duration 4 hours



turnoff. Quiet, calm **Castle Rock Beach** (11) is at the western end of the national park.

There aren't any cafés or eateries en route, so fortify yourself at Manly before your walk, or pack a picnic and hit the tables at Tania Park or **Clontarf Beach** (12). Bus it back into the city from the southern end of the **Spit Bridge** (13).

SYDNEY FOR CHILDREN

Organised ankle-biter activities ramp up during school holidays (December/January, April, July and September) – check www.sydneyforkids.com.au and the free *Sydney's Child* and *Kid Friendly* magazines for listings. Otherwise, Sydney Aquarium (p57), Taronga Zoo (p62), Oceanworld (p64) and Luna Park (p62) are sure-fire entertainers. The Sunday GalleryKids programme at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (p59) includes dance, stories, magic, cartoons, Aboriginal performance, costumed tour guides and exhibition-specific events.

Darling Harbour is great for kids – there's a playground, paddleboat pond and a cutesy Thomas the Tank Engine-esque people mover (p57) looping around the bay (or they can

just feed the seagulls). **Lollipops Playland** (Map p84; ☎ 9331 0811; www.lollipopsplayland.com.au; Shop 201 Bent St, Entertainment Quarter, Lang Rd, Moore Park; child under-1 free, child over-1 \$12; adult \$5; ☎ 9.30am-6pm) is a multistorey, exploratory funhouse with ball pits, mazes, tunnels and nets. There's also two outdoor, state-of-the-art playgrounds built on bouncy matting for spills 'n' thrills. Nearby are Centennial Park horse rides (p65). At Manly Quarantine Station, the Kids' Ghost Walk (p64) is a spooky good time. If all else fails, take them to the beach!

TOURS

Harbour Cruises

Here are just a few of the many ferry, catamaran and sailing cruises available on Sydney Harbour:

Captain Cook Cruises (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9206 1111; www.captaincook.com.au; Wharf 6, Circular Quay; adult/child/family \$25/12/55; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm) CCC run hop-on hop-off Explorer Cruises. Dodging windsurfers, ferries, 18ft skiffs and a menagerie of harbour craft, they scoot between Shark Island, Watsons Bay, Taronga Zoo & Darling Harbour. Ask about lunch and dinner cruises.

Matilda Cruises (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9264 7377; www.matilda.com.au; Pier 26, Aquarium Wharf, Darling Harbour; adult/child/family \$29/25/75; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm) Matilda's proud armada of catamarans, yachts and ferries will float you out onto the water and zoom you 'round Sydney's main harbour sights on a one-hour Rocket Tour. Full-day sailing adventures and luxurious cocktail dinner cruises are also available.

Sydney Ferries (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9246 8300, 13 15 00; www.sydneyferries.nsw.gov.au; Wharf 4, Circular Quay; adult/child/family from \$15/9/45; ☎ 8am daily, 1pm Mon-Fri, 12.30pm Sat & Sun, 8pm Mon-Sat) If anyone's got the credentials to show you Sydney Harbour, it's Sydney Ferries. One-hour to 2½-hour morning, afternoon

and evening harbour-sights-and-lights cruises are available, chugging around on Sydney Harbour's cherished old ferries.

City Bus Tours

Bondi Explorer (☎ 13 15 00; www.sydneyexpress.info; adult/child \$39/19, from driver & Bus TransitShops; ☎ every 30min 8.45am-4.15pm) The blue STA Bondi Explorer bus does a two-hour, 19-stop loop of the inner city and Eastern Suburbs from Circular Quay to Kings Cross, Double Bay, Rose Bay, Vaucluse, Watsons Bay, the Gap, Bondi Beach and Coogee, returning to the city along Oxford St.

Sydney Explorer (☎ 13 15 00; www.sydneyexpress.info; adult/child \$39/19, from driver & Bus TransitShops; ☎ every 20min 8.40am-5.20pm) The red STA Sydney Explorer bus follows a two-hour, 26-stop hop-on hop-off loop from Circular Quay through Kings Cross, Chinatown, Darling Harbour and The Rocks, with pithy on-board commentary and discounted entry to attractions.

Walking Tours

BridgeClimb (Map pp78-9; ☎ 8274 7777; www.bridgeclimb.com; 5 Cumberland St, The Rocks; adult \$169-296, child \$100-195; ☎ 3½hr tours around the clock) Once only painters and daredevils scaled the Harbour Bridge – now anyone can! Make your way through the departure lounge and extensive training session, don your headset, umbilical cord and dandy grey jumpsuit (Elvis would be so proud) and up you go. Go to the toilet *before* you start the climb.

Sydney Aboriginal Discoveries (☎ 9680 3098, 0405-289 016; www.sydneyaustour.com.au/Abordiscover.html; tour per person \$65-180; ☎ 2-4hr tours daily) This outfit runs several different tours focusing on Aboriginal culture and history, including indigenous landmarks and sacred sites, a tasty feast of native Australian foods and a Dreamtime cruise. Call for details on tours, departure points and times.

Sydney Architecture Walks (Map pp78-9; ☎ 8239 2211; www.sydneyarchitecture.org; tours depart Museum of Sydney, cnr Bridge & Phillip Sts; adult/concession \$25/20; ☎ 2hr walks, rain or shine) These bright young archi-buffs run four themed walking tours: Sydney Opera House, Public Art, Harbour Features & Buildings and Urban Patterns of Sydney. Call for bookings and departure times.

The Rocks Walking Tours (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9247 6678; www.rockswalkingtours.com.au; 23 Playfair St, The Rocks; adult/child/family \$20/11/51; ☎ 10.30am, 12.30pm, & 2.30pm Mon-Fri, 11.30am & 2pm Sat & Sun) Ninety-minute tours of the historic Rocks area that both entertain and exercise.

Other Tours

Bonza Bike Tours (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9331 1127; www.bonzabiketours.com; tours depart Portobello Caffé, Circular Quay E; adult/child \$70/50; ☎ 10.30am &

2.30pm Oct-Mar, 10.30am & 1.30pm Apr-Sep) These bonza bike boffins run daily 3½-hour 'Sydney Classic' bike tours – they make a great introduction to the harbour city, trundling past the Opera House, Hyde Park, Darling Harbour, Chinatown, Sydney Tower and the Royal Botanic Gardens.

Harbour Jet (Map pp78-9; ☎ 1300 887 373; www.harbourjet.com; Shop 113a, Level 1 Harbourside, Darling Harbour; adult/child/family from \$60/40/180; ☎ 9am-7pm) The Harbour Jet boats rocket you around the harbour in an untamed, white-knuckle, sea-spray ride of 270-degree spins, fishtails and 75km/h power-stops that'll test how long it has been since you had breakfast.

Maureen Fry (☎ 9660 7157; www.ozemail.com.au/~mpfry; 2hr tours per person from \$18) The omniscient Maureen runs introductory tours to Sydney, from The Rocks to Macquarie St to Paddington. Mainly for groups; individuals by arrangement.

Whale Watching Sydney (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9583 1199; www.whalewatchingsydney.net; Eastern Pontoon, Circular Quay; 3hr tours adult/child/family \$80/45/205; ☎ 9am & 1pm May-Nov) Humpback and Southern Wright whales habitually shunt up and down the Sydney coastline, sometimes venturing into the harbour. WWS runs seasonal tours with a 98% sighting success rate!

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

January

January Festival (www.sydneyfestival.org.au) This massive event floods the city with art in January, including free outdoor concerts in the Domain.

Australia Day (26 January) Regattas, barbecues and fireworks.

Chinese New Year (January/February) Dragon-boat races, food stalls, fireworks, acrobats, buskers, Chinatown parade.

Flickerfest (www.flickerfest.com.au) International short-film festival at Bondi Pavilion.

February

Tropfest (www.tropfest.com.au) The world's largest short-film festival. Custom-made seven-minute films incorporate a compulsory surprise prop (bubble, hook, kiss etc) and are judged by an international megastar like Salma Hayek or Gabriel Byrne.

Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras (www.mardigras.org.au) In late February, the highlight of this world-famous festival is the over-the-top, sequined Oxford St parade, culminating in a bacchanalian party at the Entertainment Quarter.

March/April

Royal Easter Show (www.eastershow.com.au) Twelve days at Homebush: animals, agriculture and plenty to entertain the kids.

Women's Festival (www.internationalwomensday.com) Celebrations coinciding with International Women's Day.

Sydney Cup (www.ajc.com.au) Australia's second-most popular horse race; at Royal Randwick.

May

Sydney Writers' Festival (www.swf.org.au) Celebrates literary Sydney, with guest authors, talks and forums.

Australian Fashion Week (www.mafw.org.au) Early May at Circular Quay.

June

Sydney Film Festival (www.sydneyfilmfestival.org) A 14-day orgy of cinema at the State Theatre and Dendy cinemas.

Sydney Biennale (www.biennaleofsydney.com.au) International arts festival held in even-numbered years at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and city venues.

Darling Harbour International Jazz Festival (www.darlingharbour.com) Free jazzy jamboree.

July

Yulefest (www.katoomba-nsw.com/yulefest.html) Blue Mountains businesses celebrate a maladjusted southern-hemisphere Christmas.

August

City to Surf Run (www.city2surf.sunherald.com.au) Held on the second Sunday in August, 50,000 fools run 14km from Hyde Park to Bondi Beach.

September

Royal Botanic Gardens Spring Festival (www.rbg.syd.nsw.gov.au) Spring is celebrated with concerts, plant markets and a plethora of pollen.

Festival of the Winds (www.waverley.nsw.gov.au/info/pavilion/fotw) A multicultural kite-flying festival at Bondi Beach.

Rugby League Grand Final (www.nrl.com.au) The two best teams in the National Rugby League decide who's better.

October

Manly Jazz Festival (www.manly.nsw.gov.au/manlyjazz) Labour Day weekend; three days of bebop and za ba de da.

November

Sculpture by the Sea (www.sculpturebythesea.com) Mid-November; the cliff-top trail between Bondi and Bronte transforms into a sculpture garden.

December

Christmas Day (25 December) Backpackers descend on Bondi Beach, much to the consternation of overworked lifesavers.

BABYSITTING

The **Wright Nanny** (☎ 9660 6621; www.thewrightnanny.com.au; ☎ office 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri) supplies first aid-qualified babysitters and nannies across Sydney. A casual nanny costs \$18/hr; babysitters are \$15/hr. An \$18 agency fee applies. **Perfect Solutions** (☎ 9976 2214; www.perfectsolutions.com.au; ☎ office 9am-9pm) babysit for \$15/hr (minimum four hours) plus a \$20 booking fee. Lollipops Playland (above) has child-care for five-to-nine year olds – \$20 for three hours.

Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race (www.rolexsydneyhobart.com; 26 December) Sydney Harbour teems with onlookers for the start of this gruelling ocean race.

New Year's Eve (31 December) The Rocks, Kings Cross and Bondi Beach heave with alcohol-sodden celebrations; fireworks displays over the harbour.

SLEEPING

Sydney's well of accommodation seems to never run dry, with everything from budget hostels to cosy B&Bs, comfortable motels, authentic Aussie pubs and deluxe harbour-view hotels. Between November and February, prices (especially at beachside hotels) jump by as much as 40%. Conversely, when tumbleweeds blow through foyers in the slower winter months, you can often strike a bargain. Many city hotels cater primarily to business travellers, so their weekend rates may be lower. Predictably, a view can play a big part in determining the price of a Sydney room. Booking through an accommodation agency like Tourism NSW (p52) can sometimes land you a discount.

Read up on Sydney's neighbourhoods before deciding where to stay: party people should head for Kings Cross, Darlinghurst, Paddington or Bondi; shoppers, gourmands and highlight hunters should shoot for The Rocks, CBD, Darling Harbour or Chinatown. If you want to keep things low-key, try Glebe, Potts Point, Surry Hills or Manly.

In this chapter, a budget room is classified as up to \$50/100 for a single/double. Midrange doubles cost between \$101 and \$200; top-end doubles start at \$200 a night. Serviced apartments usually sleep more than two people – good value for groups and families.

City Centre, The Rocks & Circular Quay BUDGET

Base Backpackers Wanderers on Kent (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9267 7718; www.basebackpackers.com; 477 Kent St; dm \$26-32; s & d \$90; 🍷 🍺) Strangely deserted during the day (everyone's out enjoying themselves), Sydney's Base Backpackers branch livens up at night when things get downright raucous at the bar. Stay in the sanitary girls-only 'sanctuary' (\$34) or risk boy-contamination in the dorms. Some rooms are shoeboxes – caveat emptor.

Y Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9264 2451; www.yhotel.com.au; 5-11 Wentworth Ave; dm \$35, s/d/tr/ff from \$75/90/110/175; 🍷 🍺 🍻 🍷) Standards here are high – simple, spotless rooms with TV, phone, fridge and

air-con plus an adjoining café downstairs. The city centre is just beyond Hyde Park across the road and Oxford St is a wiggle away. Busy as a woodpecker during Mardi Gras. Child-friendly; good wheelchair access.

Grand Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9232 3755; www.merivale.com; 30 Hunter St; s/d/tr \$80/90/110; 🍷 🍺) One of Sydney's oldest hotels, the Grand's lower floors pulsate with pokies, pool tables and beery hordes. Keep going up and you'll find neat rooms with TVs and fridges. Shared bathrooms can be a drag, but for these prices in this location, you won't hear anyone complaining.

MIDRANGE

Mercantile Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9247 3570; www.mercantilehotel.citysearch.com.au; 25 George St, The Rocks; d from \$110) The Mercantile's green-tiled exterior hints at the Irish sympathies emanating from the bar. Upstairs the basic, renovated, pub-style rooms take a less partisan approach with neutral colours and shared bathrooms. Four suites have spas (\$140); avoid near St Patrick's Day.

Lord Nelson Brewery Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9251 4044; www.lordnelson.com.au; 19 Kent St, Millers Pt; d \$120-180; 🍷 🍺) Built in 1841, this boutique sandstone pub has its own brewery (try a pint of 'Nelson's Blood'), and is just far enough from The Rocks' tourist throng. Rooms are elegantly colonial (stripy sheets and dormer windows), most with private bathrooms.

Australian Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9247 2229; www.australianheritagehotel.com; 100 Cumberland St, The Rocks; d \$125) Despite the shared bathrooms, this pub accommodation scores points for snug communal rooms, 24-hour harbour-view roof terrace, complimentary glasses of port and the patriotic bar downstairs (96 Australian beers!).

Palisade Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9247 2272; www.palisadehotel.com.au; 35 Bettington St, Millers Pt; d/tr \$125/130) Standing in Gothic isolation atop Millers Point, this old-time, nicotine-stained dock workers' pub has dodged kitsch Rocks-style makeovers and remains a great place for a beer and a cheap night's sleep. Basic, shared-facility rooms are weary but have magnificent harbour views.

Russell (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9241 3543; www.therussell.com.au; 143a George St, The Rocks; d incl breakfast from \$140, with bathroom \$235; 🍷 🍺) Traditionally decorated rooms (Laura Ashley, you have a lot to answer for), lounge areas with fireplaces, library and

GAY & LESBIAN SYDNEY

Gay is the new straight in Sydney; gay and lesbian culture forming a vocal, vital part of Sydney's social fabric. **Taylor Square** (Map p84) on Oxford St is the centre of arguably the second-largest gay community in the world; Newtown is home to Sydney's lesbian scene. Gay beachlife focuses on Lady Bay (p63) and Tamarama (p63). Also check out Red Leaf Pool on New South Head Rd, Double Bay, and Andrew 'Boy' Charlton Pool (p65). For men, tans, moustaches and heavy pecs are the 'classic' look; the lesbian scene is a bit more inclusive. Despite broad acceptance, a homophobic streak still taints some community sectors and 'gay bashing' isn't unknown. For the record, in NSW male homosexual sex is legal over the age of 18; for women it's over 16.

Sydney's famous **Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras** (☎ 9568 8600; www.mardigras.org.au) started in 1978 as a political march commemorating New York's Stonewall riots, and evolved into a month-long arts festival which culminates in a fleshy street parade on the last Saturday in February. Gyms empty out, solariums cool down and 'Back, Sack & Crack' wax emporiums tally their profits. The rampant 200-foot parade begins on Elizabeth St around 7.30pm and coverts the length of Oxford St. Around 700,000 spectators line the streets – find a balcony or cordon off a pavement patch before it starts. Tickets to the post-parade **Mardi Gras Party** sell out by mid-January. They're usually only available to Mardi Gras members, though interstate and overseas visitors receive temporary membership.

Free gay media includes *SX*, *Sydney Star Observer* and *Lesbians on the Loose*. For counselling and referral call the **Gay & Lesbian Counselling Service of NSW** (☎ 8594 9596; www.glcsw.org.au). **Gay & Lesbian Tourism Australia** (www.galta.com.au) has a wealth of information about gay and lesbian travel in Oz.

Go for a wander along the city end of Oxford St, or try the following popular faves on for size.

ARQ (Map p84; ☎ 9380 8700; www.arqsydney.com.au; 16 Flinders St, Darlinghurst; Thu/Fri/Sat/Sun free/\$10/20/5; 🍷 9pm-6am Thu & Fri, 10pm-9am Sat, 9pm-9am Sun) If Noah had to fill his bilge with groovy, gay clubbers, he'd head here with a big net and some tranquillisers. This flash megaclub has a cocktail bar, recovery room and two dance floors with hi-energy house music, drag shows and a hyperactive smoke machine.

Exchange Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9331 2956; www.qbar.com.au; 34-44 Oxford St, Darlinghurst; Q Bar/Phoenix/Exchange free-\$20/5-10/free; 🍷 Q Bar & Phoenix 10pm-late, Exchange 10pm-4am Mon-Fri, 9am-6am Sat & Sun) Q Bar upstairs pumps hot house nightly; Phoenix club downstairs is the sticky, sexy, claustrophobic home to an alternative gay crowd. Sandwiched in between, the Exchange is a regulation beery pub.

Imperial Hotel (Map p86; ☎ 9519 9899; www.theimperialhotel.com.au; 35 Erskineville Rd, Erskineville; admission free; 🍷 3pm-midnight, to 2.30am Thu, to 6am Fri & Sat) The Art Deco Imperial's drag shows inspired *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (the opening scene was filmed here). Any drag queen worth her sheen has played the Cabaret Room, while the Cellar Bar, Public Bar and Priscilla Lounge heave with cheery pool boys and raging house.

Midnight Shift (Map p84; ☎ 9360 4319; www.themidnightshift.com; 85 Oxford St, Darlinghurst; video bar free, club \$10-20; 🍷 video bar noon-late Mon-Fri, from 3pm Sun, club 11pm-late Fri & Sat) Sydney's perennial good-time boy palace packs in everyone from beefcakes to drags. The grog is cheap, the patrons messy, Kylie rules and mankind chalks its collective cue by the pool tables. Pick up a 'Pick-up Card' at the bar to help with introductions ('I'm easy...but it looks like you're hard...').

Newtown Hotel (Map p86; ☎ 9517 1728; www.newtownhotel.com; 174 King St, Newtown; admission free; 🍷 11am-midnight Mon-Fri, 10am-midnight Sat, to 10pm Sun) The Newtown does a heady G&L trade with folks who just want to go to the local boozier and have a few laughs. Musical stimulation is provided by sensationally sequined drag acts.

Oxford Hotel (Map p84; ☎ 9331 3467; 134 Oxford St, Taylor Sq, Darlinghurst; admission free; 🍷 downstairs 24hr, Gilligans 5pm-late, Ginger's 6pm-late Wed-Sat) Big and crimson, the ever-lovin' Oxford is a Taylor Sq beacon. Downstairs it's beer-swilling and mannish. First-floor Gilligan's serves luxe cocktails; top-floor Ginger's has indulgent lounge service. After-dance party crowds heave and sway.

Sol's Deck Bar (Map p84; ☎ 9360 8868; www.solsdeckbar.net.au; 191 Oxford St, Darlinghurst; admission free Mon-Wed, \$5 Thu-Sun; 🍷 restaurant 11am-late, bar 8pm-late) When you drag your bones out of bed at whatever pm, boot it down to Sol's for a beer, some tapas and a perv over Taylor Sq. The cocktail bar fires up later on with resident DJs. Lipstick ladies love Friday night's 'Bitch' session.

a rooftop garden just minutes from Circular Quay make the Russell a solid choice. Rooms have fresh flowers; families do what families do in the four-bed suite.

Bed & Breakfast Sydney Harbour (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9247 1130; www.bedandbreakfastsydney.com; 142 Cumberland St, The Rocks; s/d from \$130/155; (P) (☺)) This 100-year-old guesthouse boldly claims to be the 'World's best-located B&B' – with The Rocks and the city on your doorstep, it's difficult to argue. Rooms with private bathrooms manage to capture an Australian flavour without straying into twee territory. Smaller shared-bathroom rooms are also available.

Hyde Park Inn (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9264 6001; www.hydeparkinn.com.au; 271 Elizabeth St; s/d/f incl breakfast from \$140/155/190; (P) (☺) (☑)) Dating back to the late '60s, this place invests little in aesthetics but a lot in generous room sizes and friendliness. All rooms have kitchenettes, the best of them have Hyde Park views. We're assured the 1986 apricot colour scheme is about to meet its maker.

Vibe Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9282 0987; www.vibehotels.com.au; 111 Goulburn St; d from \$185; (P) (☺) (☑) (♿)) Vibe's management ran the renovators' broom through every corner of this old-stager hotel, creating an utterly funky establishment. Lime, purple and black colours course through foyers; rooms feature maximal mirrors, stripy retro bed linen and cool abstract art. Good weekend rates.

TOP END

Blacket (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9279 3030; www.theblacket.com; 70 King St; d from \$225 (☺) (☑)) Alluringly calm, Blacket's uber-stylish suites blend 'escape' with lashings of contemporary cool. Loft suites – all white, caramel and grey – sleep four and have spa, separate lounge, kitchenette and gadgetry (cable TV, CD players and wi-fi). Frequent online specials.

Hilton (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9266 2000; www.sydney.hilton.com; 488 George St; d from \$270; (P) (☺) (☑) (♿)) Try to contain your glee as you waltz into the refurbished Hilton. Cooler-than-cool rooms feature black timber bedheads, flat-screen TVs, DVD player and internet telephony. Superchef Luke Mangan runs the restaurant; Zeta bar (p95) lures beautiful people. Business facilities are state of the art.

Establishment (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9240 3100; www.establishmenthotel.com; 5 Bridge La; d from \$290; (☺) (☑)) So hip it hurts, Establishment is the secret hideaway for superstars and squillionaires (not so

secret now, eh?) with the snazziest interiors in town – exquisite furnishings, indulgent bathrooms and high-tech services proliferate. Clubs, bars and restaurants on-site.

Central Station, Chinatown & Darling Harbour

BUDGET

Wake Up! (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9288 7888; www.wakeup.com.au; 509 Pitt St; dm from \$24, d & tw from \$88; (☺) (☑)) Backpackers sleep soundly in this converted 1900 department store on top of Sydney's busiest intersection. It's a convivial, colourful, professionally-run hostel with a tour desk, 24-hour check-in, sunny café, bar and no excuse for neglecting your inner party-animal.

Railway Square YHA (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9281 9666; www.yha.com.au; 8 Lee St; dm \$27-33, d \$78-88; (☑) (♿)) Adjoining Central Station, this hostel's main building is an historic 1904 train shed – some of the dorms are inside New South Wales' old 'red rattler' train carriages. Facilities lean to the functional side of fancy, but are better than you'd expect for these prices. The more expensive doubles have bathrooms.

Sydney Central YHA (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9218 9000; www.yha.com.au; 11 Rawson Pl; dm from \$29, d & tw from \$86; (P) (☺) (☑) (♿)) Near Central Station this 1913 heritage-listed monolith has been renovated to within an inch of its life. Rooms are brightly painted and the kitchens are great, but the highlight is sitting in the rooftop pool making faces at the Department of Commerce workers in the office tower across the street.

MIDRANGE

Pensione Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9265 8888; www.pensione.com.au; 631-635 George St; s/d/f \$100/115/250; (☺) (☑)) This tastefully reworked post office (derelict for 40 years!) features smart, neutrally shaded rooms with air-con, TV, fridge and good security. Mark Rothko prints and a wooden staircase warm the simple, restrained surrounds. Aim for a rear room – George St traffic grumbles in the night.

Capitol Square Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9211 8633; www.rydges.com/capitolsquare; cnr George & Campbell Sts; d from \$110; (P) (☺)) Entirely convenient near both Chinatown and Darling Harbour, with double-glazed windows to keep out the noise. Tidy en suite rooms strive for a plush, mildly regal atmosphere. Wheelchair access available; frequent internet deals.

Vulcan Hotel (Map p84; ☎ 9211 3283; www.vulcanhotel.com.au; 500 Wattle St, Ultimo; s/d from \$100/130; (P) (☺))

Vulcan was a watering hole well into the '90s before the lousy pub rooms were converted into boutique budget accommodation. Discrete international staff direct you to minimalist grey-and-white en suite rooms, complete with TV and mini-bar. No sign of Dr Spock here...

Aaron's Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9281 5555; www.aaronshotel.com.au; 37 Ultimo Rd, Chinatown; s/d from \$110/130; (☺) (☑)) Aaron doesn't actually exist – he was invented to secure top-of-the-page 'Aa' listing in the *Yellow Pages*. The cunning plan seems to have worked – Aaron's brilliantly located, clean, light-filled rooms are always full. Kid-friendly; wheelchair accessible.

Glasgow Arms Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9211 2354; www.glasgowarmshotel.com.au; 527 Harris St, Ultimo; s/d \$120/135; (☺)) Scoot your way across the road from the Powerhouse Museum, through the bar, beyond the poker machines and upstairs to the Glasgow Arms' traditionally decorated, no-frills pub-style rooms. The balcony rooms on William Henry St are the pick of the bunch.

Metro Hotel Sydney Central (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9283 8088; www.metrohospitalitygroup.com; 431 Pitt St; d from \$135; (P) (☺) (☑) (♿)) Centrally located, the courteous Metro has a brassy lobby, a business centre and serviceable rooms with classy touches (Brett Whiteley prints), plus a rooftop pool if you feel like ignoring the city below. Deluxe rooms are stylish; standard rooms aren't.

Kings Cross, Potts Point & Woolloomooloo

BUDGET

Original Backpackers (Map p82; ☎ 9356 3232; www.originalbackpackers.com.au; 160-162 Victoria St, Kings Cross; dm/s/d \$25/55/65; (☑)) A hostel for almost 25 years, this may well be Sydney's original backpackers. It's a rambling 176-bed affair in two character-filled Victorian houses, with friendly staff, decent bathrooms, good security and gas cooking. The social scene is lively and inclusive without being debauched.

Highfield Private Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 9326 9539; www.highfieldhotel.com; 166 Victoria St, Kings Cross; dm/s/d incl breakfast \$25/60/70) Clean and serviceable without igniting anyone's interior-design passions, Highfield is a reliable independent option, with simple rooms (shared bathrooms) and solid 24-hour security. Top floor rooms are the sunniest.

Woodduck Harbour City Backpackers (Map pp78-9; ☎ 1800 882 922; www.harbourcitybackpackers.com

.au; 50 Sir John Young Cres, Woolloomooloo; dm \$20-25, d & tw from \$70; (☑)) Friendly and funky, this Woolloomooloo hostel has been getting great feedback from travellers, mostly for its awesome roof terrace which floats you up into the city lights. It's a huge place with 250 beds, but the ceilings are high and rooms airy – you'll never feel like you're stuffed into someone else's backpack.

Eva's Backpackers (Map p82; ☎ 9358 2185; www.evasbackpackers.com.au; 6-8 Orwell St, Potts Point; dm \$25, d & tw \$60; (☑)) Eva's is a perennial backpackers favourite, probably because it's far enough out of the Kings Cross fray to maintain some composure and dignity. Smile-free staff have a bit too much composure at times, but it's clean, secure and there's an ace rooftop barbecue area and sociable kitchen/dining room.

Pink House (Map p82; ☎ 9358 1689, 1800 806 385; www.pinkhouse.com.au; 6-8 Barnclough Sq, Kings Cross; dm \$26, d & tw incl breakfast from \$65; (☑)) Yep, it's a pink house. The relentless colour attack continues inside through spritely communal areas, across creaky floorboards into robustly furnished dorms. There are three leafy patios where hungover guests nod off in the shade. Free barbecues are a hit.

O'Malley's Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 9357 2211; www.omalleyshotel.com.au; 228 William St, Kings Cross; s/d/tr incl breakfast \$70/80/90) This jocular Irish pub has traditionally decorated, well-furnished rooms with private bathrooms upstairs that are surprisingly quiet, given the William St location and nightly twiddle-dee-dee live music downstairs. Harbour-view rooms are winners.

Royal Sovereign Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 9331 3672; www.darlobar.com.au; cnr Liverpool St & Darlinghurst Rd, Darlinghurst; d from \$80) Directly above the boozy Darlo Bar (BYO earplugs), these small, nifty rooms put you in the thick of the action at a bargain price. Olive/cream/grey colour schemes scream, 'I was hip five years ago', but communal bathrooms are immaculate.

MIDRANGE

Bernly Private Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 9358 3122; www.bernlyprivatehotel.com.au; 15 Springfield Ave, Kings Cross; dm/s/d/f incl breakfast from \$15/45/60/130; (☑)) The larger-than-it-looks backstreet Bernly has simple shared-facility rooms with 24-hour reception and a rooftop garden. There's also a crop of 'executive' doubles with private bathrooms (\$100 per night). The location is potentially a bit dodgy, but the greatest risk probably comes from dodging dog poo.

Maisonette Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 9357 3878; maisonettehotel@bigpond.com; 31 Challis Ave, Potts Point; s/d from \$60/100) This friendly place above the Challis Ave caffeine cauldron is top value, offering small, bright rooms with kitchenettes, TVs and spick-and-span bathrooms. Ask about lower rates for longer stays.

Hotel 59 (Map p82; ☎ 9360 5900; www.hotel59.com.au; 59 Bayswater Rd, Kings Cross; s/d/tr from \$90/100/135; ☎) Hotel 59 is good bang for your buck on the quiet part of Bayswater Rd, with nouveau-Med rooms and smiley staff who go out of their way not to get in your way. The café downstairs does whopping cooked breakfasts (\$5 to \$11) for those barbarous Kings Cross hangers.

Macleay (Map p82; ☎ 9357 7755; www.themacleay.com; 28 Macleay St, Potts Point; d \$115-135, tw/tr \$130-150; ☎) The upper floors of these serviceable serviced apartments have harbour panoramas. Rooms are mired in an '80s design quagmire (shame, Ken Done, shame...), and when the laundry's running, the hallways smell like an oven full of wet socks, but the location, price and friendliness-factor win through.

Crest Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 9358 2755; www.cresthotel.com.au; 111 Darlinghurst Rd, Kings Cross; d \$130-150; ☎) With the definitive Kings Cross location, the Crest caters to business bods, visiting Koreans (there's an amazing Ginseng Bathhouse on-site) and boozy boys'-nights-out that last for days. The rooms are comfy but could be anywhere in the world if you don't have a harbour view.

Victoria Court Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 9357 3200; www.victoriacourt.com.au; 122 Victoria St, Potts Point; d from \$150; ☎) The Victoria is a sweetly run guesthouse filling a pair of three-storey 1881 brick terrace houses with 22 rooms with private bathrooms, all with TVs and plenty of over-the-top Victoriana (floral quilts, chandeliers, paintings of fruit etc). Still, it's clean, secure and tastily located.

Mariners Court (Map p82; ☎ 9358 3888; www.marinerscourt.com.au; 44-50 McElhorne St, Woollloomooloo; d/tr/f from \$155/175/200; ☎) A tucked-away treasure, this ship-shape port in a storm won't be the flashiest place you'll stay in Sydney, but it offers that rare combination of location, price and roominess. All rooms have courtyards or balconies, some with leafy outlooks. Good wheelchair access.

Simpsons of Potts Point (Map p82; ☎ 9356 2199; www.simpsonspottspoint.com; 8 Challis Ave, Potts Point; s/d

from \$155/175; ☎) An 1892 red-brick politician's palace, Simpsons has been dutifully converted into a quiet, refined B&B. The 14 spacious rooms with private bathrooms feature fireplaces, balconies and antique prints. The lounge has a piano if you want to mingle or tinkle.

TOP END

Regents Court (Map p82; ☎ 9358 1533; www.regentscourt.com.au; 18 Springfield Ave, Potts Point; d \$240-275; ☎) Boutique, Art Deco Regents Court is big on personal service and mid-century furnishings. Handsome, spacious rooms with private bathrooms have impeccably stocked kitchenettes. Michael Hutchence once roamed the roof terrace with its Potts Point pot plants and barbecue.

BLUE Sydney (Map p82; ☎ 9331 9000; www.tajhotels.com/Sydney; 6 Cowper Wharf Rd, Woollloomooloo; d from \$405; ☎) The hotel rooms in Woollloomooloo's redeveloped wharf may be a bit poky, but boutique sensibilities are redemptive. Hobnob with bigwigs and biz-kids at the Water Bar, relax at the day spa, cruise the wharf restaurants or sneak a peep at Russell Crowe's end-of-pier pad.

Darlinghurst & Surry Hills

MIDRANGE

Hotel Altamont (Map p82; ☎ 9360 6000; www.altamont.com.au; 207 Darlinghurst Rd, Darlinghurst; d incl breakfast from \$100; ☎) Altamont flagged the end of '60s peace and love, but here in Darlinghurst the good times continue unabated. Spiffy-looking doubles with private bathrooms feel as though they should cost more than they do, staff and communal areas are welcoming (especially the terrace), and it's tantalisingly close to The Cross.

City Crown Motel (Map p84; ☎ 9331 2433; www.citycrownmotel.com.au; 289 Crown St, Surry Hills; d from \$100; ☎) In an awesome Surry Hills location, this unfailingly busy motel has plush new carpet throughout, clean, simple rooms (none particularly spacious), and an on-site café serving mean caffeine. Prices skyrocket 50% during Mardi Gras.

Cambridge Park Inn (Map p84; ☎ 9212 1111; www.cambridgeinn.com.au; 212 Riley St, Surry Hills; d \$145-170; ☎) The embodiment of what famous architect Robin Boyd called the 'Great Australian Ugliness', this hotel ain't pretty. On the plus side it's superbly located, personable for its size and has a heated pool, spa, sauna

and super views from the upper floors. Beauty is only skin deep.

TOP END

Kirketon (Map p82; ☎ 9332 2011; www.kirketon.com.au; 229 Darlinghurst Rd, Darlinghurst; d from \$220; ☎) The Kirketon's designer rooms are as impeccably turned out as its brash young clientele. Stylishly sparse suites are jazzed up with ritzy toiletries, bright wall colours, retro furnishings, Lindt chocolates, mohair throw rugs and plush bathrobes. The staff are just as good-looking.

Medusa (Map p82; ☎ 9331 1000; www.medusa.com.au; 267 Darlinghurst Rd, Darlinghurst; d from \$270; ☎) Medusa the seducer's shocking-pink exterior hints at the witty, luscious décor inside. Small colour-saturated suites with enormous beds, mod-con bathrooms and regal furnishings open onto a tranquil courtyard and reflection pool: meditation will minimise the chances of your hair turning into snakes. If it does, Medusa is very pet-friendly.

Paddington & Woollahra

MIDRANGE

Hughenden (Map p84; ☎ 9363 4863; www.hughendenhotel.com.au; 14 Queen St, Woollahra; s/d incl breakfast from \$130/150; ☎) A quirky Italianate guesthouse located a stone's throw from Paddington, the SCG and Centennial Park. Rooms feature antique bric-a-brac flourishes; some have balconies. For your distraction there's Sunday high tea, poetry readings and Sir Victor the nocturnal pianist.

Sullivans Hotel (Map p84; ☎ 9361 0211; www.sullivans.com.au; 21 Oxford St, Paddington; d \$145-160; ☎) Popular with gay travellers, this well-managed 64-room motel in 'Paddinghurst' has tidy rooms which, aside from the contemporary bathrooms, feel surprisingly un-hip. Still, the location's great, and the brick-paved central courtyard has a solar-heated pool and dribbling fountain.

Eastern Suburbs

MIDRANGE

Savoy Hotel (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9326 1411; www.savoyhotel.com.au; 41 Knox St, Double Bay; d \$120-150, f \$190-260; ☎) Sitting pretty among the generically good-looking in Double Bay's coffee strip, the Savoy's rooms offer unexpected amounts of individual character. Atrium-view rooms are the cheapest; strive for an executive balcony suite looking towards the harbour.

TOP END

Doyles Palace Hotel (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9337 5444; www.doyles.com.au; 1 Military Rd, Watsons Bay; d \$145-420; ☎) In one of Sydney's most beautiful spots, this is really a plush-o-rama top-end hotel, but they have excellent midrange rooms and good winter rates too. Reservations, and fish and chips at Doyles on the Beach (p93) are essential.

Glebe

BUDGET

Glebe Point YHA (Map p86; ☎ 9692 8418; www.yha.com.au; 262-264 Glebe Point Rd; dm \$25-29, s/d \$60/70; ☎) An incredible hulk of a hostel with colourful, basic rooms and shared bathrooms. The main lure is the party-people rooftop with its barbecue nights, speed-dating extravaganzas and salsa showdowns. Kitchens and bathrooms are reliable in a YHA kind of way.

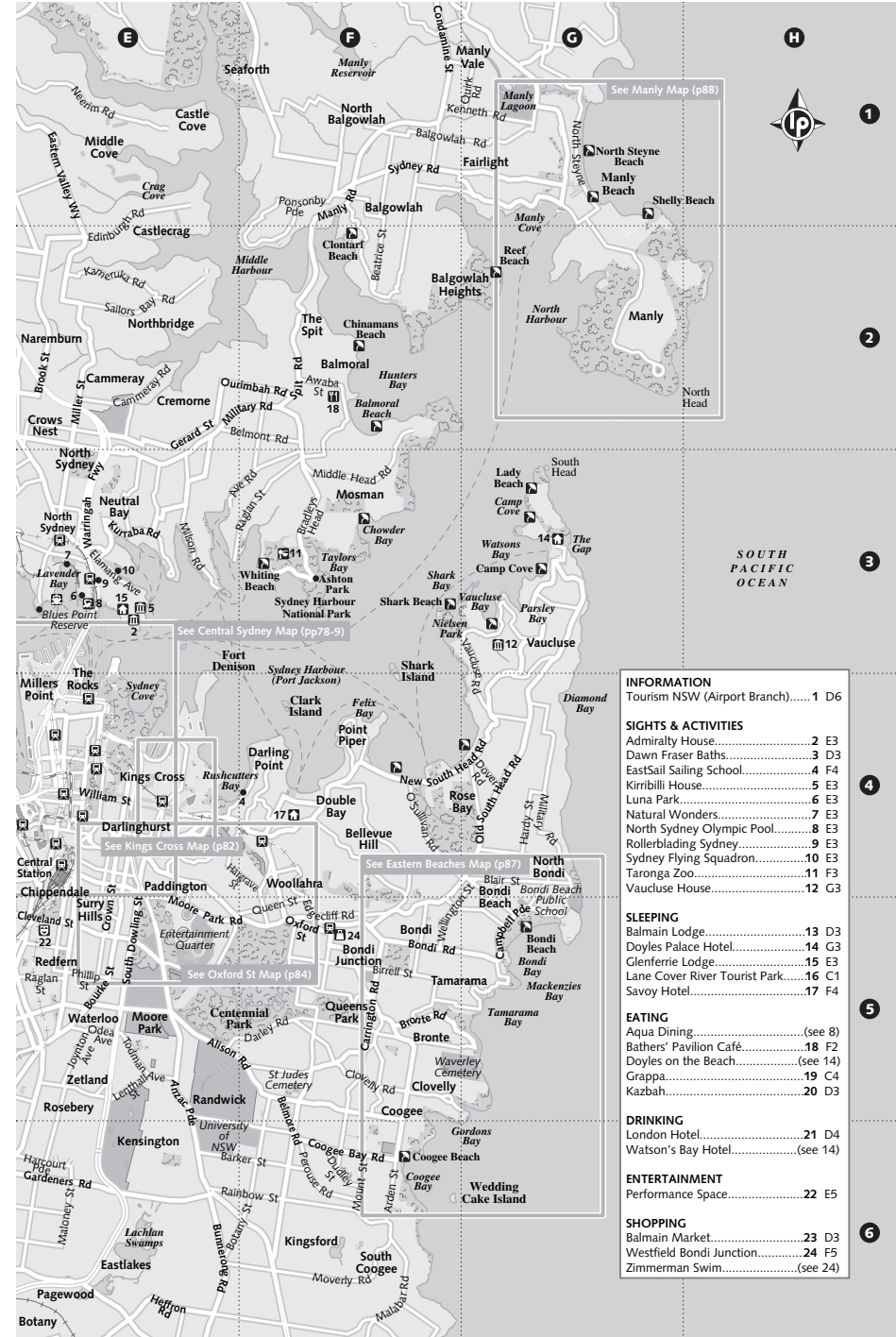
Alishan International Guest House (Map p86; ☎ 9566 4048; www.alishan.com.au; 100 Glebe Point Rd; dm \$25, s/d from \$55/77; ☎) In a substantial, quiet, 111-year-old house in the centre of Glebe, the Alishan (an area of Taiwan, don't you know?), is clean, quiet and well run, with multilingual staff, spacey communal areas, gas cooking and a disabled-access room.

Wattle Guest House (Map p86; ☎ 9552 4997; www.wattlehouse.com.au; 44 Hereford St; dm/s/d incl breakfast \$30/75/80; ☎) Readers have bombarded us with glowing reports of the Wattle – they must be doing something right! It's a super-tidy 1877 Victorian house with shared bathrooms and affable management, not far from Glebe Point Rd. Sorry, no kids.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Unilodge (Map p86; ☎ 9338 5000; www.unilodgehotel.com.au; cnr Broadway & Bay St; s/d/tr \$120/160/180; ☎) The rooms inside this former Grace Bros department store lack the 'wow' factor, but are good value. Impressive facilities include a business centre, indoor lap pool, pool table, gym, magical roof terrace and efficient staff nattering away to each other on walkie-talkies.

Tricketts Bed & Breakfast (Map p86; ☎ 9552 1141; www.tricketts.com.au; 270 Glebe Point Rd; s \$150, d \$180-200; ☎) Inside this preciously restored 1880s merchant's mansion, seven large rooms with private bathrooms are decked out with antiques and Persian rugs. The garden is a verdant wonderland and there's a kitchen, ballroom, billiard table and barbecue. No under-12s.



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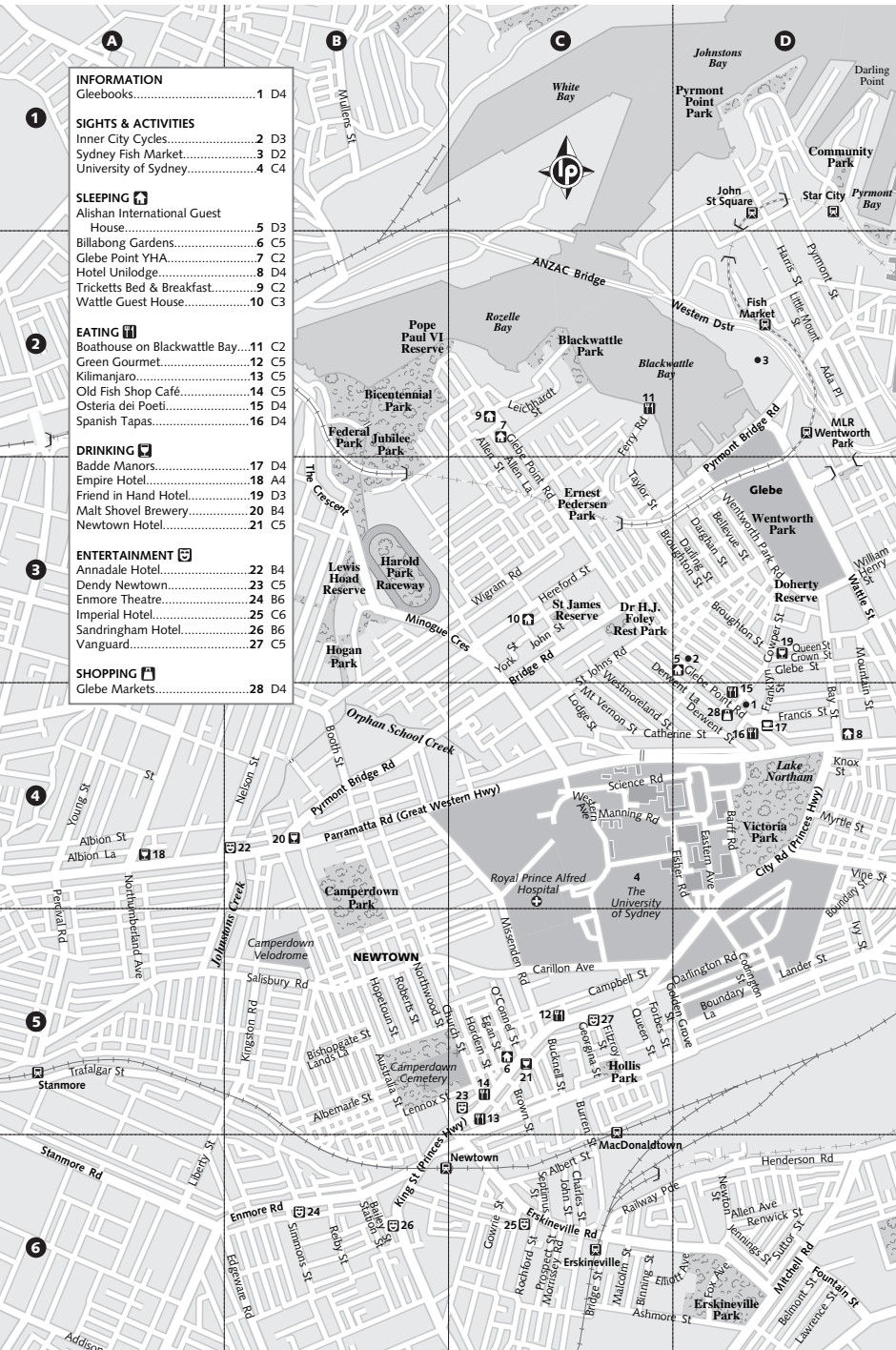
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Newtown
BUDGET

Billabong Gardens (Map p86; ☎ 9550 3236; www.billabonggardens.com.au; 5-11 Egan St; dm/s \$25/49, d \$66-80; 🏠 🚶 🚲) This enduring motel/hostel offers a broader experience than most backpacker joints, with travellers, touring rock bands and urbanites of all persuasions lobbing up on the doorstep. Rooms come with or without bathrooms, encircling a central solar-heated pool.

Balmain
BUDGET

Balmain Lodge (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9810 3700; fax 9810 1500; 415 Darling St; s/d \$80; 🏠) Rotating around a ferny courtyard on Balmain's Darling St backbone, the no-fuss, shared-facility rooms here have kitchenettes, TV and DVD and not much chutzpah. But you're not here to sit in your room, are you? Balmain has enough pubs, cafés and restaurants to keep you entertained for weeks. Two disabled-access rooms; kid-free zone.

Bondi
BUDGET

Bondi Sands (Map p87; ☎ 1800 026 634; www.bondisands.com; 252 Campbell Pde; dm/d incl breakfast from \$20/50; 🏠) Just 60m from the sand, Bondi Sands was on a highway to hell before the new owners steered it back from the brink. Rooms are simple and clean with shared bathrooms; a few have stunning views – ask for No 7, 8, 17 or 18. If you miss out, head for the roof terrace.

Bondi Beachouse YHA (Map p87; ☎ 9365 2088; www.bondibeachouse.com.au; 63 Fletcher St; dm/s/d/f from \$22/70/80/110; 🏠 🚶) A short stroll from the beach, Bondi Beachouse has clued-up staff, a pool table, TV rooms, barbecue, free play stuff (surfboards, snorkels, etc) and Tamarama Beach views from the rooftop spa. It's a friendly, clean, sunnyside-up kinda joint. Bus 380 from Circular Quay stops nearby.

Indy's Surfside Bondi (Map p87; ☎ 9365 4900; www.surfsidebackpackers.com.au; 35a Hall St; dm/d \$25/65; 🏠) Not for the mild-mannered, beer-stained Indy's is Bondi Party Central, with enormous psychedelic surf murals, big-screen TVs and frenetic communal areas smelling vaguely of illicit herbs. Security is tight, preventing the whole street from crashing the party.

Sinclairs of Bondi (Map p87; ☎ 9338 9911; www.sinclairsbondi.com.au; 11 Bennett St; dm \$28; s \$50-80; d & tw

incl breakfast \$66-90, f \$110-127; 🏠 🚶) High on the hill above Bondi Beach, this austere-looking house has 25 rooms with varying bed configurations to suit you or your bus of merry pranksters. It's clean, quiet and low-key; stay elsewhere if you're in party mode.

MIDRANGE

Beach Road Hotel (Map p87; ☎ 9130 7247; brh.bondi@bigpond.com; 71 Beach Rd; s/d \$70/85; 🏠 🚶) This chipper hotel is part of a big, boxy pub two blocks back from the beach. Nautical décor surfs through the bars, eateries and nightclub to the rooms, which are clean and bright with TV and decent bathrooms. Lose yourself (or any number of people) in the massive beds. Things get rowdy after dark (good or bad, it's up to you).

Hotel Bondi (Map p87; ☎ 9130 3271; www.hotelbondi.com.au; 178 Campbell Pde; s/d/tr from \$50/100/130; 🏠 🚶) Let it all hang out at the landmark 'Pink Palace' on Bondi Beach. Small, tidy rooms have wardrobe-sized private bathrooms and faux-colonial furnishings, and sometimes aren't far enough from the drunken hordes downstairs. Still, if you have a beach view, you'll be laughing.

Bondi Beach B&B (Map p87; ☎ 9365 6522; www.bondibeach-bnb.com.au; 110 Roscoe St; s/d/tw/f incl breakfast \$100/150/150/250; 🏠) Owners Nadia and Michael go all-out to make this place feel like your own home (only cleaner, and more Mediterranean). You're close to all the good stuff in Bondi, but you can also find a park. Ask about room-only rates and low season discounts.

TOP END

Ravesi's (Map p87; ☎ 9365 4422; www.ravesis.com.au; 118 Campbell Pde; d \$125-295, ste \$245-450; 🏠 🚶) Ravesi's fits into the Bondi scene like a briefcase on a beach, but the shaggy, salty surfset don't seem to mind the suits necking Euro beers at the bar. Upstairs, the 16 chocolate-and-cream rooms are sophisticated, many with balconies and ocean views.

Coogee
BUDGET

Wizard of Oz Backpackers (Map p87; ☎ 9315 7876; www.wizardofoz.com.au; 172 Coogee Bay Rd; dm \$22-44; 🏠) In a refurbished California bungalow a few hundred metres up the yellow brick road from the beach, this laid-back place is painted out in a muted, undersea palette, perhaps in an effort to subdue Coogee's incessant party

vibe. Dorms house four to 14 slumberers; communal areas (centring around the barbecue and big-screen TV) are lively.

Grand Pacific Private Hotel (Map p87; ☎ 9665 6301; fax 9665 6203; cnr Beach & Carr Sts; s/d/tr with shared bathrooms from \$35/45/65) In *no* way is this place anywhere near grand, but oddly charming in a decaying, down-at-heel, Charles Bukowski kind of way. And the beachside location is sensational! Grab that person you're having a dirty affair with (having bumped off their spouse) and hole up for a seedy seaside weekend straight from a true-crime novel.

Coogee Beachside Accommodation (Map p87; ☎ 9315 8511; www.sydneybeachside.com.au; 178 Coogee Bay Rd; d & tw \$75) Run by the folks from Wizard of Oz up the road, Beachside offers simple, clean doubles and twins with tidy shared bathrooms in a converted house. If you're in Sydney for a while, they also have one-, two- and three-bed apartments for longer stays.

MIDRANGE

Coogee Bay Boutique Hotel (Map p87; ☎ 9665 0000; 9 Vicar St; d \$100-250, (P) ☎) Above the impossibly effervescent Coogee Bay Hotel are casual, old-school pub rooms, plus fancier, spacious suites in a newer wing on Vicar St. All rooms have private bathrooms, fridge and TV – bring earplugs for the older rooms if you don't want to lip-synch to the bands downstairs.

our pick Dive Hotel (Map p87; ☎ 9665 5538; www.divehotel.com.au; 234 Arden St; d & tw incl breakfast \$150-220; (P) ☎) Dive into Coogee for this impeccable beachside midranger, about as far from being a dive as it is from the city. Plush purple and green carpets, huge comfy beds, TVs and private bathrooms in every room, 50m to the beach – the bus ride from town is a small price to pay.

Manly BUDGET

Manly Backpackers (Map p88; ☎ 9977 3411, 1800 662 500; www.manlybackpackers.com.au; 24 Raglan St; dm/d/apt \$34/80/180; (P) ☎) Manly's most reliable budget option, this converted ambulance station is a complex upstairs/downstairs affair with plenty of beds, boozy nocturnal activities, international staff and enormous kitchens. The best rooms open onto balconies; studio apartments (in a separate building) are perfect for small groups. Winter rates plummet.

Manly Beach House (Map p88; ☎ 9977 7050; www.manlybeachhouse.com.au; 179 Pittwater Rd; s/d/tr \$50/60/70;

(P) ☎) Readers recommend this homely, mega-friendly, good-value option, a four-minute walk from the beach. Polite management prides itself on making *sure* you're comfortable and have all the requisite local info. Shared facilities are clean and serviceable.

MIDRANGE

101 Addison Road (Map p88; ☎ 9977 6216; www.bb-manly.com; 101 Addison Rd; s/d \$100/150) Behind a huge frangipanni tree, this quaint four-star B&B has two romantic rooms and snug communal areas. If it's not beach weather, plunk on the grand piano ivories, shuffle some rooks and knights around or have a twang on the guitar. There are only two rooms, so book ahead.

Manly Paradise (Map p88; ☎ 9977 5799; www.manlyparadise.com.au; 54 North Steyne; motel d \$110-165, apt \$220-400; (P) ☎) Feel the salt on your skin at these comfortable apartments sleeping five, with balconies overlooking Manly's ocean beach. There's a heated rooftop pool, spa, sauna, half-court tennis and cable TV. Grab an '80s-style motel room (plenty of plastic and peach) if you're feeling more 'road'.

Periwinkle Guest House (Map p88; ☎ 9977 4668; www.periwinkle.citysearch.com.au; 18-19 E Esplanade; s/d incl breakfast \$135/165; (P) ☎) This lavishly restored Victorian manor faces the sunset across Manly Cove. Twelve rooms with private bathrooms are elegant and well appointed, and there's a stylish, cosy kitchen. If your wallet can stand the heat, avoid the ground floor rooms facing the courtyard which can get a bit stuffy.

TOP END

Manly Pacific (Map p88; ☎ 9977 7666; www.accorhotels.com.au; 55 North Steyne; d from \$190; (P) ☎) Right on Manly's ocean beach, this dapper mid-rise hotel is 15 minutes by JetCat from Circular Quay and a million miles from the city's withering hustle. Check the surf from oceanfront balconies, or hit the rooftop pool if you don't want sand in your laptop.

North Shore BUDGET

Collaroy Beachhouse YHA (Map p108; ☎ 9981 1177; www.sydneybeachhouse.com.au; 4 Collaroy St, Collaroy; dm \$20-39, d & tw \$54-80, f \$84-130; (P) ☎) If you're around the Northern Beaches, the new owners at this clean, airy hostel will make you feel at home. There are free surfboards, bikes and snorkelling gear, and a rooftop pool. Pizza, barbecue and movie nights keep things happening.

CAMPING IT UP

If you're sleeping in your campervan or camping, there are depressingly few places close to central Sydney where you can park or pitch for the night. If the surf's up, the enthusiastically managed **Sydney Lakeside Holiday Park** (Map p108; ☎ 9913 7845; www.sydneylakeside.com.au; Lake Park Rd, Narrabeen; unpowered/powerd sites per 2 people \$45/50, cabins from \$140; (P) ☎) is a beachy option, 26km north of Sydney. If another night on the sleeping mat doesn't appeal, they have dozens of air-conditioned cabins.

Also on the North Shore, **Lane Cove River Tourist Park** (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9888 9133; www.lcrpt.com; Plassey Rd, North Ryde; unpowered/powerd sites per 2 people \$30/36, cabins from \$125; (P) ☎) is closer to the city (10km out) with 150 caravan sites, plus cabins. Cool off in the pool when city temperatures swelter.

Around 15km south of the city, **Grand Pines Tourist Park** (Map p108; ☎ 95297329; www.thegrandpines.com.au; 289 The Grand Pde, Sans Souci; powered sites per 2 people \$40, cabins from \$69; (P) ☎) doesn't have tent sites, but you can park your campervan or bunk down in a cabin or on-site caravan.

Glenferrie Lodge (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9955 1685, 1800 121011; www.glenferrielodge.com; 12a Carabella St, Kirribilli; dm/s/d/f incl breakfast \$40/79/99/159; (P) ☎) Outside this barrel-chested 1880s house is a ridiculous sculpture that someone unearthed in their backyard. Ignore it (and the equally ridiculous prime minister down the street) and head inside where clean rooms, spotless shared bathrooms and helpful management await. Close to Milsons Point train station and Kirribilli ferry pier.

EATING

Other Australian cities hate to admit it, but Sydney – with its multicultural melange, abundant fresh produce and geographic assets – has won the food trifecta. Adelaide may have the great wines, Melbourne the café culture and Hobart the seafood, but Sydney has it all, and right on Sydney Harbour.

Start the day with a strong espresso and a plate of inner-city ricotta hotcakes, then chow into the fresh catch of the day at a waterfront restaurant for lunch. Rise above it all with a glittering harbour view and a bold Mod-Oz dinner, wolf down a pie and sauce at the foxy or after a night on the tiles, or spend the wee hours lingering over a chandelier-and-laminate supper in a Chinatown food den.

At the top end, celebrity chefs plate up mini-masterpieces for wealthy corporate crowds. Those on tighter budgets need not despair – thousands of cafés, bistros and restaurants offer innovative, quality meals at moderate prices. When all else fails, go for the great Aussie fish and chips by the beach.

City Centre, The Rocks & Circular Quay

Bodhi (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9360 2523; Cook & Phillip Park, 2-4 College St; yum cha \$5-8, mains \$6-18; ☎ lunch daily, dinner Tue-Sun) Bodhi scores high for its cool design and leafy disposition. Quick-fire waiters bounce off stainless-steel minimalism inside and slatted wooden tables and umbrellas outside. Have a swim at the pool next door before daily *yum cha*, a relaxed and value-for-money affair. The barbecue buns rule.

Mother Chu's Vegetarian Kitchen (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9283 2828; 367 Pitt St; mains \$8-15; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Shimmering in plastique splendour beneath the monorail, Mother Chu's blends vegetarian Taiwanese, Japanese and Chinese influences to ensure the perfect tofu or clay-pot hit. There's not much going on in terms of ambience, but the veg-lovers don't seem to mind.

Sailors Thai Canteen (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9251 2466; 106 George St; mains \$16-26; ☎ lunch-8pm) Wedge yourself into a gap between arts-community operators, politicians and media manoeuvrers at Sailors' long communal zinc-topped table and order the Chang Mai chicken curry. The balcony tables fill up fast, but fortune might be smiling on you.

One Alfred Street (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9241 4636; 1 Alfred St; mains around \$17; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) An unexpected gem among the morass of Circular Quay fast-food joints, One Alfred Street serves up classics like slow-cooked Wagyu beef with potato and parsnip flakes, and quality fish and chips. Also great for a morning caffeine fix or a lazy afternoon vino (Antipodean wines only!).

Quay (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9251 5600; Level 3, Overseas Passenger Terminal, Circular Quay W; mains \$33-54; ☎ lunch

Tue-Fri, dinner daily) With iconic Sydney on view, sitting on the balcony next to the teary, streamer-hurling non-embarkers at the passenger terminal is surreal. Equally euphoric is Quay's stylish service, outstanding wine list and Peter Gilmore's cooking (try the poached quail with truffle custard).

Guillaume at Bennelong (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9241 1999; Sydney Opera House; mains \$35-42; ☺ lunch Thu & Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) Turn the old 'dinner-and-show' cliché into something meaningful at the Sydney Opera House. Snuggle into a banquet and enjoy acclaimed chef Guillaume Brahimi's masterful cuisine. His basil-infused tuna with mustard seed and soy vinaigrette has fans hollering operatically all over town.

Aria (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9252 2555; 1 Macquarie St; mains \$44-52; ☺ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily) Aria is the star in Sydney's fine-dining firmament, an award-winning combination of chef Matthew Moran's stellar dishes, awesome Opera House views (is there a sexier building?) and faultless service. The mouth-watering lamb rack is hard to overlook. Pre- and after-theatre supper menu available.

Rockpool (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9252 1888; 107 George St, The Rocks; mains \$49-60; ☺ dinner Tue-Sat) Behind an unassuming green façade, Rockpool is arguably Sydney's best restaurant (oh, how they argue...). Chef Neil Perry's modern seafood creations continue to wow the critics – expect crafty, contemporary cuisine with Asian influences, faultless service and an alluring wine list. Order Perry's signature stir-fried mud crab omelette.

Chinatown & Darling Harbour

Chinese Noodle Restaurant (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9281 9051; Shop 7, Prince Centre, 8 Quay St, Chinatown (entry from Thomas St); mains \$7-12; ☺ lunch & dinner) It's sweaty, shoulder-to-shoulder eating beneath wreaths of plastic grapes in this busy noodle nook, the stringy fare made fresh daily. The combination dish looks like spaghetti bolognese on steroids – masses of thick wheat noodles, pork, shredded cucumber and lashings of chilli and black vinegar.

BBQ King (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9267 2433; 18-20 Goulburn St, Chinatown; mains \$10-30; ☺ lunch & dinner) Low on ambience but big on flavour, the King serves up royal portions of roast duck, suckling pig and other Cantonese staples. You might need a Tsing Tao or three to stay sane amidst the mildly obnoxious chaos. Take-away bald glazed ducks next door; open late.

Blackbird (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9283 7385; Balcony, Cockle Bay Wharf, Darling Harbour; mains \$12-20; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This place veritably thrums from the minute it opens its doors for breakfast. Funky young staff cruise the cool interior delivering hearty bowls of pasta, New York-style pizzas from the hot-stone oven and fat triangles of cake. Perfect to fuel up before or after a big night out.

Chinta Ria, Temple of Love (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9264 3211; L2 Cockle Bay Wharf, Darling Harbour; mains \$15-26; ☺ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner daily) Swirling choreographically around an enormous concrete Buddha, Chinta Ria's temple-in-the-round offers zingy Malaysian hawker-style food at reasonable prices. Go with a rabble of friends for Hokkien noodles, sambal prawns, seafood laksa, super-slippery fried *kuay teow* and flaky roti bread.

Golden Century (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9212 3901; 393-99 Sussex St, Chinatown; mains \$15-50; ☺ lunch & dinner) Open until 4am, this frenetic restaurant cooks crustaceans straight from the fish tanks displaying your nervous-looking dinner, forming a window-wall to the street. Splash out on the whole lobster cooked in ginger and shallots: from-tank-to-net-to-kitchen-to-table.

Zaafraan (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9211 8900; 2nd fl, 345 Harbourside, Darling Harbour; mains \$18-34; ☺ lunch & dinner) In a city with a gazillion cheap Indian joints, Zaafrāan stands out. Authentic and innovative curries are served up in front of awesome views across Darling Harbour's sparkle and sheen. Book a balcony seat and launch into the beef vindaloo. Good vegetarian selection too.

Darlinghurst, Surry Hills & East Sydney

Bar Reggιο (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9332 1129; 135 Crown St, East Sydney; mains \$10-15; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Blink and you'll miss this classic, dimly-lit little Italian diner in East Sydney's 'Little Italy' district. The walls are plastered with Ferrari flags and Rome murals; the menu board in the window has been there so long the lettering has started to flake off. Pasta, pizza, meat and fish dishes have stood the test of time. Closed Sundays (church!).

Onde (Map p82; ☎ 9331 8749; 345 Liverpool St, Darlinghurst; mains \$18-26; ☺ dinner) Culturally enriching, palate-pleasing and great value – no wonder Onde is always packed. Some Darlinghursters eat here three times a week for the great service, adventurous wine list and trad faves like duck terrine, lamb tenderloin and buttermilk berry pudding. No bookings.

Longrain (Map p84; ☎ 9280 2888; 85 Commonwealth St, Surry Hills; mains \$18-36; ☺ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) Longrain makes serving dozens of louche city diners look easy. Inside a century-old, wedge-shaped printing-press building, urbanites slurp down delicacies such as red venison and snakebean curry and fish dishes deserving of their own church. Cocktails at the bar afterwards; no reservations.

bills (Map p82; ☎ 9360 9631; 433 Liverpool St, Darlinghurst; mains \$19-25; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Sydney adores Bill Granger's sunny eatery with its newspaper-strewn communal table. Dishes such as sweetcorn fritters with roast tomato, spinach and bacon are equally adorable. Also at Surry Hills (Map p84; ☎ 9360 4762; 359 Crown St), and Woollahra (Map p84; ☎ 9328 7997; 118 Queen St).

Billy Kwong (Map p84; ☎ 9332 3300; 3/355 Crown St, Surry Hills; mains \$19-42; ☺ dinner) Chef Kylie Kwong's novel take on Chinese cuisine soon explains why this hip eating house is always so busy. You can't go wrong with staples like spicy, diced, fried green beans with hoisin and garlic, or a generous serve of Kylie's signature dish, the crispy-skin duck with plum sauce.

ourpick Wildrice (Map p84; ☎ 8354 0088; Shop 1, 160 Flinders St, Darlinghurst; mains \$20-28; ☺ dinner Mon-Sat) In Darlinghurst's obscure southern reaches, Wildrice is a glorious exaltation of modern Thai cooking. Rice arrives in moulded conical mounds, which you smother with red chicken-breast curry and grilled sweet-chilli scampi. Coriander by the bushel; absolutely sensational.

Kings Cross, Potts Point & Woolloomooloo

Harry's Café de Wheels (Map p82; ☎ 9357 3074; Cowper Wharf Rd, Woolloomooloo; mains \$5-10; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) For over 50 years, cab drivers, sailors and boozed-up nocturnals have slurred orders for pea-and-pie floaters over Harry's famous counter. Sit on a milk crate overlooking the hulking Woolloomooloo warships and inhale a 'Tiger' (pie, peas, mashed potatoes and gravy). Deadly.

Fratelli Paradiso (Map p82; ☎ 9357 1744; 12 Challis Ave, Potts Point; mains \$12-25; ☺ breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Mon-Fri) This stylish bistro-bakery has them queuing at the door. The intimate, mod room showcases seasonal Italian dishes cooked with Mediterranean zing. Lots of busy black-clad waiters, lots of Italian chatter, lots of oversized sunglasses – somehow Rome doesn't seem so far away...

Hugo's Bar Pizza (Map p82; ☎ 9357 4018; 33 Bayswater Rd, Kings Cross; mains \$18-24; ☺ dinner) Punchy little brother of Hugo's Lounge upstairs, this indoor/outdoor neighbourhood nook has been wowing pizza fans with its delicious discs and home-style Italian fare. The marble-fronted bar and sunken velvet lounge are luxurious, but the menu won't break the bank.

Paddington, Woollahra & Eastern Suburbs

Gusto (Map p84; ☎ 9361 5640; 2a Heely St, Five Ways, Paddington; mains \$6-14; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Busy to the point of embarrassment for neighbouring businesses, Gusto does things with gusto. Egg-ham-and-tomato-breakfast rolls nourish skinny actresses on the footpath tables; the deli doles out cheeses, pesto, hams and olives with enthused abandon.

Jones the Grocer (Map p84; ☎ 9362 1222; 68 Moncur St, Woollahra; mains \$10-15; ☺ breakfast & lunch) Bob the Builder, Jones the Grocer – some things just make sense. JTG offers high-end groceries, cookbooks and gourmet goodies galore. Munch into a caramel slice with a serious coffee at the café, then double wrap some double brie and hotfoot it to Centennial Park for a picnic.

Arthur's Pizza (Map p84; ☎ 9332 2220; 260 Oxford St, Paddington; mains \$10-25; ☺ lunch Sat & Sun, dinner daily) For some reason Arthur's sign was originally installed upside down. We liked it that way, but in a fit of reverse rebellion it's been turned rightside up. Don't let this abject conformity deter you from Arthur's pizzas, which continue to rebel. Try the 'Zorro' (olives, ricotta, red onion, spinach and semidried tomato).

Doyles on the Beach (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9337 2007; 11 Marine Pde, Watsons Bay; mains \$29-51; ☺ lunch & dinner) King of Sydney seafood for so long, you might think Doyles is resting on its laurels. Nevertheless, it ain't your average fish-and-chipper, and catching the harbour ferry to Watsons Bay for a seafood lunch is a quintessential Sydney experience.

Glebe

Osteria dei Poeti (Map p86; ☎ 9571 8955; 73 Glebe Point Rd; mains \$17-28; ☺ lunch Fri & Sat, dinner Mon-Sat) Fostering 'benign benevolence' through stomach satisfaction, the talkative 'Tavern of Poets' serves unpretentious, home-style Italian that's poetic enough to be beyond most domestic kitchens. If the occasional poetry readings are overly florid, head for the deck outside.

Spanish Tapas (Map p86; ☎ 9571 9005; 26 Glebe Point Rd; tapas \$10-14, mains \$20-23; ☎ lunch Thu-Sat, dinner daily) This is a good-time restaurant: shared tapas plates, spirited music, raucous diners and waiters who say, 'Yezz, we jave a table forl yo!' Cheap jugs of sangria dissolve party resistance and fire you up for flamenco-dancing displays.

Boathouse on Blackwattle Bay (Map p86; ☎ 9518 9011; Ferry Rd, Glebe; mains \$39-43; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) The best restaurant in Glebe, and one of the best seafood restaurants in Sydney. Offerings range from oysters so fresh you'd think you shucked them yourself to a snapper pie that'll go straight to the top of your favourite dish list. Anzac Bridge views; reservations essential.

Newtown

Kilimanjaro (Map p86; ☎ 9557 4565; 280 King St; mains \$10-13; ☎ lunch Wed-Sun, dinner daily) Its cosy tables, carved-wooden bowls, saffron aromas and cheery atmosphere will raise your appetite high above the Serengeti. Authentic dishes, such as the Yassa (chicken on the bone marinated in spicy tomato sauce) are utterly filling.

Green Gourmet (Map p86; ☎ 9519 5330; 115 King St; mains \$13-15; ☎ lunch & dinner) This is a self-serve, pay-per-kilo, kind-to-animals eatery, plating up Chinese-Malaysian vegetarian at affordable prices. On weekends, grab a few morsels of cruelty-free *yum cha* and wash it down with one of the excellent teas on offer. Alcohol-free too.

Balmain

Kazbah (Map pp76-7; ☎ 6555 7067; 37a Darling St; mains \$33-35; ☎ breakfast & lunch Sat & Sun, dinner Wed-Sat) Rock the Kazbah for weekend brunch (bookings essential), or a peppy dinner with the windows folded out to the hot summer street. Generous serves feature plenty of eggplant, tahini, hummus and cumin; leave room for the Turkish delight icecream with blueberries and currant vodka.

Leichhardt

Bar Italia (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9560 9981; 169-71 Norton St; mains \$14-24; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This enduringly popular restaurant serves fabulous pasta and famous *gelato*, the essential accessory for a Norton St *passeggiata* (stroll). A wisteria-hung courtyard, Italian soccer posters, good honest food and a little red wine make for an

authentic experience. Don't expect slick Italian design – the pleasure is in the food.

Grappa (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9560 6090; Shop 1, 267-277 Norton St; mains \$30-40; ☎ lunch Tue-Fri & Sun, dinner daily) Grappa's open kitchen, snazzy bar and cream-leather seats provide the setting for rich, succulent dishes (such as baked snapper in rock-salt crust) and bounteous wood-fired pizzas. If it's warm, sit outside on the terrace, sip chianti (or some grappa) and think of Tuscany. Ahhh, Tuscany...

Bondi

Gertrude & Alice (Map p87; ☎ 9130 5155; 40 Hall St; mains \$10-15; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This second-hand bookshop/café is so un-Bondi – there's not a model or surfer in sight! Students and academics hang out reading, sipping chai tea and acting like Americans in Paris. Join them for a mezza platter and theological discussion around communal tables in shambolic book-lined rooms.

Gelbison (Map p87; ☎ 9130 4042; 10 Lamrock Ave; mains \$10-18; ☎ dinner) Legendary enough for a local rock band to name themselves after it, never-changing Gelbison entertains families, backpackers, locals and visiting movie stars (is Gelbison an anagram of Mel Gibson?) with great-value pizza and pasta. Sit with the surfers over a steaming bowl of prawn-and-mushroom fettuccine or a 'magic boot' pizza.

Sean's Panaroma (Map p87; ☎ 9365 4924; 270 Campbell Pde; mains \$24-35; ☎ lunch Sat & Sun, dinner Wed-Sat) One of Sydney's more romantic dinner spots, with ocean vistas, creative dishes, friendly staff and celebrity attendees. Sean Moran's restless menu lets you eat with the seasons. Suckling pig roasted with cabbage, pear, sweet potato and anise is a winter night's feast. In summer, succumb to seafood.

North Bondi Italian Food (Map p87; ☎ 9300 4400; 118-20 Ramsgate Ave; mains \$26-29; ☎ lunch Wed-Sun, dinner daily) Expansive windows float your eyes beyond the terrace to the sighing North Bondi swell. You won't hear any sighs inside (it's all hard surfaces and conversations) but the pasta, seafood, soups and salads engage your other senses. Try the generous wild boar *pappardelle*. Wines by the glass.

Bondi Icebergs (Map p87; ☎ 9365 9000; 1 Notts Ave; mains \$35-75; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Poised above the famous swimming pool, Icebergs' views sweep across the Bondi Beach arc to the sea. Jacketed, bow-tied waiters deliver fresh seafood and steaks cooked with élan. The wine

list is superb, and the bar, overlooking the Campbell Pde lights, is never boring for a beer.

Coogee & Bronte

Siam Spice (Map p87; ☎ 9665 5077; 215 Coogee Bay Rd, Coogee; mains \$10-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) Sydney and cheap Thai are synonymous, but the food here sidesteps the cliché by virtue of sheer quality. Surrounded by Southeast Asian décor, adorable dishes like chunky beef *massaman* curry and grilled king prawns with aromatic salad and chilli jam will spice up your life.

Swell (Map p87; ☎ 9386 5001; 465 Bronte Rd, Bronte; mains \$11-28; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Pull up a pew next to Anthony LaPaglia for seaside Swell's spanking day-turns-to-night menu. Greet the day with poached eggs, pumpkin, feta and spinach, linger into lunch with a snazzy steak sandwich and return at dinner-time for the salt-and-pepper squid.

Barzura (Map p87; ☎ 9665 5546; 64 Carr St, Coogee; mains \$17-26; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Frequented by retired Australian cricketers in dark sunglasses, Barzura's views have to be the best of any café in Sydney (if not the country!). The sunbaked stretch north along Coogee beach to Bondi is a stunner, as are deliciously uncomplicated salads, pides, pasta dishes and generous breakfasts, all served with a smile.

North Shore & Manly

Bathers' Pavilion Café (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9969 5050; 4 The Esplanade, Balmoral; mains \$21-32; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Romantic Spanish Mission-style architecture, sweeping harbour views and outstanding Mod-Oz food collide at one of Sydney's most timeless eateries. You might want to dine with the snooty Balmoral set at the restaurant next door for far less democratic prices. Then again, you might not...

Bower Restaurant (Map p88; ☎ 9977 5451; cnr Marine Pde & Bower La, Manly; mains \$24-30; ☎ breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Thu) Follow the foreshore path east from Manly's ocean beach to this little white food room, within spray's breath of tiny Fairy Bower beach. The 'Big Bower Breakfast' (\$17) is a knockout, Mod Oz mains are delicious, it's BYO, and they're not afraid to let Olivia Newton John wail from the stereo.

Le Kiosk (Map p88; ☎ 9977 4122; 1 Marine Pde, Shelly Beach, Manly; mains \$29-37; ☎ lunch daily, dinner Fri-Sun) 'Le Kiosk' sounds ugly but defines romance – a little sandstone cottage, subtle lighting, open fireplace and the lull of lapping waves. The

food proves a worthy paramour; swoon over snapper fillet with sautéed calamari, bacon, chilli and cauliflower. Solid vegetarian options too.

Aqua Dining (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9964 9998; cnr Paul & Northcliff Sts, Milsons Point; mains \$35-38; ☎ lunch & dinner) Perched above the North Sydney Olympic Pool, Aqua Dining's muted mushroom hues play second-fiddle to bridge and harbour views, while the service is superior – that rare mix of courteous, knowledgeable (the wine list beggars belief) and amiable. Yell enthusiastically for the saddle of lamb.

DRINKING

Pubs are a crucial part of the Sydney social scene, varying from the traditional (elaborate 19th-century affairs with pressed tin ceilings, or cavernous Art Deco joints with tiled walls), to the modern and minimalist. Bars are generally more stylish and urbane, often with a dress code (oh-so smart casual).

There are some rambling old pubs in The Rocks, but determining just how old they are is an inexact science. Things get rowdy here on weekends and St Patrick's Day (17 March). For more stylish surrounds and long cocktail lists, join the after-work booze hounds in the city and Circular Quay. Unless otherwise specified, admission to the bars and pubs below is free.

Twenty-four-hour-party people head for Darlinghurst and Kings Cross – its trashy main drag, Darlinghurst Rd, has plenty of drinking (and stripping) options, though there are some stylish speakeasies around here too. Glitzy fashionistas populate Paddington's pubs; students and artists drink in Surry Hills. The inner west is great for a low-key schooner – Balmain, Glebe and Newtown have plenty of decent boozers.

Wide-awake caffeine strips include Darlinghurst Rd and Victoria St in Darlinghurst, Newtown's King Street and Glebe Point Rd.

Bars

CITY CENTRE

Zeta (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9265 6070; 4th fl, Hilton Hotel, 488 George St; ☎ 5pm-2am Mon-Fri, to 3.30am Sat) Ride the Hilton escalators up to Zeta, which captivates a chic young city crew with its white vinyl lounges, discrete curtained booths (what was Snoop Dog smoking in there?) and enormous gas inferno. Sip grilled-fruit cocktails and eyeball the QVB dome from the terrace.

Tank Stream Bar (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9240 3109; 1 Tank Stream Way; ☎ 4pm-midnight Mon-Fri, from noon Fri) After-work suits and secretaries get high and heady poised over Sydney's original water supply. The Tank Stream runs thick with bottled beer, wine and cocktails, and the corporate mob can't get enough. Neither could Robbie Williams.

Establishment (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9240 3000; 252 George St; ☎ 11am-late Mon-Fri, 6pm-late Sat) Establishment's cashed-up crush proves the art of swilling cocktails after a hard, city day is not lost. Sit at the majestic marble bar, in the swish courtyard or be absorbed by a leather lounge as stockbrokers scribble their phone numbers on the backs of coasters for flirty city chicks.

Bar Europa (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9232 3377; Basement, 82 Elizabeth St; ☎ 4pm-late Tue-Fri, 8pm-late Sat) Basement vibe, subtle lighting and three debonair rooms divided by sexy screens cement Europa's reputation as an intimate, clubby hideaway for inner-city professionals. Sip a Sydneysider Sour as DJs play laid-back funk, sigh, and wonder what he/she is doing now...

KINGS CROSS & DARLINGHURST

Victoria Room (Map p82; ☎ 9357 4488; Level 1, 235 Victoria St, Darlinghurst; ☎ 6pm-midnight Tue-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat, 2pm-midnight Sun) Plush chesterfields, Art Nouveau wallpaper, dark-wood panelling and bamboo screens – the Victoria Room is the spoilt love child of a 1920s Bombay gin palace and a Hong Kong opium den. Don your white linen suit and panama hat and order a Raspberry Debonair.

Jimmy Lik's (Map p82; ☎ 8354 1400; 186 Victoria St, Potts Point; ☎ 5pm-midnight) Understated and subtle, Jimmy's is very cool, with benches almost as long as the cocktail list (try a Thai-hewn Mekong Mary with chilli *nam jim*). Jimmy's Thai restaurant is next door – there's usually a wait for a seat, but with tasty bar snacks available, who's in a hurry?

Hugo's Lounge (Map p82; ☎ 9357 4411; Level 1, 33 Bayswater Rd, Kings Cross; admission \$10 Fri, Sat & Sun; ☎ 6.30pm-2am Thu, to 3am Fri-Sun) Upper-crust interiors attract a glossy crowd: media celebs conducting histrionic conversations in between mobile-phone calls. If it feels like a CD launch you weren't invited to, head to Hugo's Bar Pizza (p93) downstairs for some tasty respite.

SURRY HILLS

Mars Lounge (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9267 6440; 16 Wentworth Ave; ☎ 5pm-midnight Tue, Wed & Sun, to 3am Thu-Sat) Red leather booths; disco-ball reflections catching

in the corner of your eye – Mars is *sooo* money. Sip a cocktail and try to stay focussed as you watch the bar staff in action, most of whom seem to be auditioning for a gig in a Justin Timberlake video.

Cafés

Bar Coluzzi (Map p82; ☎ 9380 5420; 322 Victoria St, Darlinghurst; ☎ 5am-7pm) Legendary Coluzzi has been infusing Darlinghurst with caffeine for 50 years. The food is fine, but come for the spoon-standing-up-straight-in-the-cup coffee.

Old Fish Shop Café (Map p86; ☎ 9519 4295; 239a King St; ☎ 6am-7pm) In a converted fish shop (no prizes for figuring that out), this is Newtown's tattooed, dreadlocked, caffeine-hungry hub. Friendly pierced staff will fix you a double shot as you put your feet up on the cushions in the window and watch the Newtown freak show pass onwards to oblivion.

Badde Manors (Map p86; ☎ 9660 3797; 37 Glebe Point Rd; ☎ 8am-midnight Mon-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat, 9am-midnight Sun) The feeling's eclectically old-world, but Badde Manors is a new-age kinda café, with cool, composed service – no sign of the alleged bad manners. Dogs sleep blissfully outside, dreaming of the Portuguese custard tarts and steaming lattes behind the glass.

Café Hernandez (Map p82; ☎ 9331 2343; 60 Kings Cross Rd, Kings Cross; ☎ 24hr) With some of the best coffee in Sydney, old-school Hernandez has been keeping taxi drivers and arty students awake since the '60s. When it's 3am and the joint's jumping, you'd be forgiven for thinking you're in Madrid. Reconsider your third cup – there's no bathroom.

Pubs

THE ROCKS

Australian Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9247 2229; 100 Cumberland St, The Rocks; ☎ 11.30am-midnight Mon-Sat, to 10pm Sun) This laid-back, good-humoured hotel has an astounding 96 Australian brews on offer. Try to think of four more to hit the century as you wobble through the list. The pub food borders on gourmet, and you can also sleep upstairs if you've had a few too many (p70).

Lord Nelson Brewery Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9251 4044; 19 Kent St, Millers Point Rocks; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun) Built in 1841, the 'Nello' claims to be Sydney's oldest pub (or is it the Hero of Waterloo down the road?) The on-site brewery cooks up six robust stouts and ales (don't try them all at once), and there's decent midrange accommodation upstairs (p70).

WOOLLOOMOOLOO

Old Fitzroy Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 9356 3848; 129 Dowling St, Woolloomooloo; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Sat, 3-10pm Sun) Is it a pub? A theatre? A bistro? Actually it's all three. Grab a bowl of laksa, assess the acting talent of tomorrow and wash it all down with a beer (\$33 the lot). The outdoor deck is unbeatable on a steamy summer night.

Tilbury Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9368 1955; 12-18 Nicholson St, Woolloomooloo; ☎ 8am-midnight Mon-Fri, from 9am Sat, from 10am Sun) Once the dank domain of burly sailors and salty ne'er-do-wells, the Tilbury now sparkles on Sydney's social scene. Yuppies, yachties, suits, gays and straights populate the light, bright interiors, packing the bistro and beer garden on weekends.

DARLINGHURST & SURRY HILLS

Darlo Bar (Map p82; ☎ 9331 3672; 306 Liverpool St, Darlinghurst; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-midnight Sun) Occupying its own tiny block, the Darlo's triangular retro room is a magnet for thirsty urban bohemians with something to read or a hankering for pinball or pool. It's pretty much a neighbourhood pub, but it's a very interesting neighbourhood.

Cricketers Arms (Map p84; ☎ 9331 3301; 106 Fitzroy St, Surry Hills; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun) The polosexual Cricketers with its cruisy, cosy vibe is a favourite haunt of arts students, locals, gays and turntable boffins. It's ace for a beer anytime, and there's tapas on tap and open fires for those rare times Sydney that actually gets cold.

Hollywood Hotel (Map p84; ☎ 9281 2765; 2 Foster St, Surry Hills; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Wed, to 3am Thu-Sat) An inner-city prow-shaped Art Deco gem, the Hollywood hasn't felt the need to buff itself up to a superficial sheen. A mixed (dare we say, bohemian) crowd of Surry Hillbillies gets down to serious beer business. Live jazz Monday to Thursday from 8pm.

Green Park Hotel (Map p82; ☎ 9380 5311; 360 Victoria St, Darlinghurst; ☎ 10am-2am Mon-Fri, noon-2am Sat & Sun) The ever-rockin' Green Park has pool tables, a beer garden with funky Dr Seuss lighting and a huge central bar teeming with travellers, gays and pierced locals. Bowie and Queen rule the jukebox.

PADDINGTON & WOOLLAHRA

Paddington Inn (Map p84; ☎ 9380 5277; 338 Oxford St, Paddington; ☎ noon-midnight Sun-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat) The Paddo's exterior makes stylised use of peeling paint – inside it's all organically

shaped wall nooks, stainless-steel stools and mildly sinister lighting. Good-looking locals elbow around the pool table; the restaurant serves upmarket pub grub.

Lord Dudley Hotel (Map p84; ☎ 9327 5399; 236 Jersey Rd, Woollahra; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Wed, to midnight Thu-Sat, noon-10pm Sun) Packed with poncy, scarf-wearing MG drivers and block-shouldered Rugby Union types, the Lord Dudley is as close as Sydney gets to an English pub. Dark woody walls; quality beers by the pint.

BALMAIN & GLEBE

London Hotel (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9555 1377; 234 Darling St, Balmain; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun) The watery Harbour Bridge views from the London's long balcony above the street are quintessentially Sydney (about as far from London as you can get). There's a great range of Oz beers on tap, plus a few quality Euro interlopers (Heineken, Hoegaarden et al), jovial punters and non-stop rugby on the telly.

Friend in Hand (Map p86; ☎ 9660 2326; 58 Cowper St, Glebe; ☎ 10am-late) This place has changed the rules of what's supposed to happen in an Australian pub. Sure, you can drink all the beer you want, but don't be surprised when the eating competitions, water-pistol fights, crab racing, cheesy Joel/John piano men and hula-hoop spin-offs cut into your drinking time.

BONDI & COOGEE

Coogee Bay Hotel (Map p87; ☎ 9665 0000; cnr Coogee Bay Rd & Arden St, Coogee; ☎ 9am-3am Thu-Sat, to midnight Sun, to 1am Mon-Wed) The rambling, rowdy Coogee Bay complex has live music at the legendary Selinas, a beer garden, open-mic nights, comedy, cocktail lounge, sports bar, bistro and bottle shop. Sit on a stool in the window overlooking the beach, sip a cold one and wait for the perfect sunset.

Beach Road Hotel (Map p87; ☎ 9130 7247; 71 Beach Rd, Bondi; ☎ 10am-2.30am Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30am Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) Weekends at this big, yellow, boxy pub are a boisterous multilevel alcohol holiday, with Bondi types (bronzed, buff and brooding) and woody out-of-towners playing pool, drinking beer and digging live bands and DJs. Sleep off your hangover upstairs (p89).

EASTERN SUBURBS

Watsons Bay Hotel (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9337 4299; 10 Marine Pde, Watsons Bay; ☎ 10am-midnight) Surrounded by two pricey seafood restaurants (both called Doyles) and a boutique hotel (also called

Doyles), you'll be pleased to know that Doyles' superlative harbour views can also be enjoyed with a jug of beer and a seat on the terrace. Avoid weekends when it's packed to the gills.

MANLY

Manly Wharf Hotel (Map p88; ☎ 9977 1266; E Esplanade; ☎ 11.30am-midnight Mon-Sat, 11am-10pm Sun) On the harbour side of Manly, the fabulously well-designed Manly Wharf Hotel is perfect for sunny afternoon beers. Tuck away a few mid-days after a salty day combating the surf then pour yourself onto the ferry.

ENTERTAINMENT

After dark, things get busy in Sydney's bars, clubs, outdoor cinemas, sports stadiums and live-music pubs. Sydney's jazz and blues circuit is healthy and innovative. The live rock scene is reclaiming patrons so rudely stolen by clubs in the '90s.

Cinema listings can be found in Sydney's daily newspapers. Pick up the Metro section in Friday's *Sydney Morning Herald* for comprehensive entertainment listings. Free weekly street magazines such as *Drum Media*, *3D World* and *The Brag* specialise in gig and club information. Tickets for most shows can be purchased directly from venues or the following distributors:

Moshtix (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9209 4614; www.moshtix.com.au; Red Eye Records, 370 Pitt St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 9pm Thu, to 5pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) Servicing alternative music venues.

Ticketek (Map pp78-9; ☎ 13 28 49; www.ticketek.com.au; 195 Elizabeth St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Wed, to 7pm Thu & Fri, to 4pm Sat)

Ticketmaster (Map pp78-9; ☎ 13 61 00; www.ticketmaster.com.au; State Theatre, 49 Market St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

SYDNEY OUTDOOR CINEMA

What better way to enjoy a balmy summer evening than to bring a rug, a picnic and a mate, and watch a film on a huge outdoor screen! **Moonlight Cinema** (Map p84; ☎ 1300 551 908; www.moonlight.com.au; Centennial Park, Oxford St (Woollahra Gate); tickets adult/concession \$15/13; ☎ dusk, late Nov-early Mar) screens classics like *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and *A Clockwork Orange*. Buy tickets online, by phone or at the gate from 7pm (subject to availability).

Open Air Cinema (Map pp78-9; ☎ 1300 366 649; www.stgeorge.com.au/openair; Mrs Macquaries Point, Royal Botanic Gardens; tickets adult/concession \$18/17; ☎ box office 6.30pm, screenings 8.30pm Jan-Feb) has a three-storey screen with surround-sound, harbour sunsets and swanky food and wine.

Bondi Open Air Cinema (Map p87; ☎ 9209 4614; www.bondioopenair.com.au; Bondi Pavilion, Bondi) is similar but saltier. Bookings essential for both venues.

Cinemas

Academy Twin Cinema (Map p84; ☎ 9331 3457; www.palacecinemas.com.au; 3a Oxford St, Paddington; tickets adult/child \$15/12; ☎ 11am-9.30pm) Arthouse enthusiasts roll up for Academy's broad selection of independent Australian and international releases and annual Italian, Mardi Gras, French and Spanish film festivals (in February, March, April and May respectively).

Verona Cinema (Map p84; ☎ 9360 6099; www.palacecinemas.com.au; 17 Oxford St, Paddington; tickets adult/child \$15/12; ☎ 11am-9.30pm) Just down the road from the affiliated Academy Twin (above), the Verona also has a café and bar, so you can sit, sip and dissect the good (usually non-mainstream) flick you've just seen.

Dendy Opera Quays (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9247 3800; www.dendy.com.au; Shop 9, 2 Circular Quay E; tickets adult/child \$14/10.50; ☎ 10.30am-9.45pm) When the harbour glare and squawking seagulls get too much, duck into the dark folds of this plush cinema, screening first-run, independent world films, augmented by friendly attendants, a café and bar. Also at Newtown (Map p86; ☎ 9550 5699; 261-3 King St).

Chauvel Cinema (Map p84; ☎ 9361 5398; www.chauvelcinema.net.au; cnr Oxford St & Oatley Rd, Paddington; tickets adult/concession \$12/10; ☎ 1pm-midnight Mon-Fri, from 11am Sat & Sun) Inside the historic Paddington Town Hall, the recently revamped Chauvel's mission statement is to offer distinct and alternative cinema experiences and to foster Sydney's film culture.

Govinda's Movie Room (Map p82; ☎ 9380 5155; www.govindas.com.au; 112 Darlinghurst Rd; Darlinghurst; dinner & movie \$22; ☎ 6-11pm) The Hare Krishna Govinda's is an all-you-can-gobble vegetarian smorgasbord, including admission to the mainstream movie-room upstairs.

IMAX (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9281 3300; www.imax.com.au; Southern Promenade, Darling Harbour; tickets adult/child

\$18/14; ☎ 10am-10pm) It's big bucks for a 45-minute movie, but everything about IMAX is big. The eight-storey screen shimmers with a selection of kid-friendly documentaries (sharks, Mars, haunted castles etc), many in 3-D, that win over reluctant adults as well. Size matters.

George St Cinemas (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9273 7431; www.geaterunion.com.au; 505 George St; tickets adult/child \$14.80/11.30; ☎ 9.30am-midnight) With more cinemas than seems feasible, this big-screen behemoth combines three huge complexes in an orgy of popcorn-fuelled populist cinematography.

Clubs

Slipp Inn (Map pp78-9; ☎ 8297 7000; 111 Sussex St; admission free-\$15; ☎ noon-4am Thu & Fri, 6pm-4am Sat) Slip in to this warren of moody rooms and bump hips with the cool kids (can you believe Crown Prince Frederik of Denmark met his Tasmanian missus here?). Resident and international selectors serve up old-school funk, Latin, breaks, tech and house. Refuel on pizza and Thai.

GoodBar (Map p84; ☎ 9360 6759; 11a Oxford St, Paddington; admission \$10-15; ☎ 9pm-3am Wed, Fri & Sat) Looking for Mr Goodbar? If he's hiding in this tiny club, it won't take you long to flush him out. No luck? Console yourself with funk, soul, reggae and hip-hop among the taut Paddington bods who make it past the face police on the door.

Home (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9266 0600; Cockle Bay Wharf, Darling Harbour; admission \$25; ☎ 11pm-6am Fri, 9pm-6am Sat) Welcome to the pleasuredome: a three-level, 2000-capacity timber-and-glass 'prow' that's home to a huge dance floor, countless bars, outdoor balconies and sonics that make other clubs sound like transistor radios. Top-name international DJs spin house; live bands amp it up.

Tank (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9240 3007; 3 Bridge La; admission \$15-25; ☎ 10.30pm-6am Fri & Sat) They've got a VIP room here – the question is, are you 'I' enough? Muster tank-loads of glamour and buckets of chutzpah and crash the party. Otherwise, mingle with *waaaay*-too-young clean-shaven stockbrokers and their waif girlfriends in this world-class, underground club.

Yu (Map p82; ☎ 9358 6511; 171 Victoria St, Potts Point; admission \$10-20; ☎ 10pm-6am Fri-Sun) Debut the glam new Eastern-Suburbs you at Yu. Sydney's best house DJs and vocal MCs (MC Fro) spin hip-hop, nu-skool, vocal and funky house in three rooms divided by sliding video

screens. Sunday's 'After Hours' session kicks till you can't take no mo'.

Cave (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9566 4755; Star City Casino, Pirrama Rd, Pyrmont; admission \$10-25; ☎ 9pm-3am Wed & Thu, to 5am Fri-Sun) This flashy fleshpot at Star City Casino fills with clubbers who like their sounds state-of-the-art, dynamic and all lit up. The dress code zooms in on labels and sex appeal, attracting J-Lo wannabes and the gamblers who know when to hold 'em.

Live Music

CLASSICAL

City Recital Hall (Map pp78-9; ☎ 8256 2222; www.cityrecitalhall.com; 2-12 Angel Pl; tickets free-\$60; ☎ box office 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Classically configured, this custom-built 1200-seat venue boasts near-perfect acoustics. Catch top-flight companies like Musica Viva, the Australian Brandenburg and Chamber Orchestras, the Sydney Symphony and touring international ensembles, soloists and opera singers.

Sydney Conservatorium of Music (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9351 1222; www.music.usyd.edu.au; cnr Macquarie & Bridge Sts; tickets free-\$25; ☎ box office 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) 'The Con' has a history of bulbous building costs: the \$145 million spent a few years ago refurbished its five live venues. The annual student/teacher performance programme includes choral, jazz, opera and chamber recitals, and free lunchtime and 'Cocktail Hour' concerts.

Sydney Opera House (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9250 7777; www.sydneyoperahouse.com; Bennelong Pt, Circular Quay E; ticket prices vary with shows; box office ☎ 9am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 2hrs pre-show Sun) As well as theatre and dance, the Opera House (p54) regularly hosts classically minded.

Australian Chamber Orchestra (☎ 8274 3800; www.aco.com.au)

Musica Viva (☎ 8694 6666; www.mva.org.au)

Opera Australia (☎ 9699 1099; www.opera-australia.org.au)

Sydney Philharmonic Choirs (☎ 9251 2024; www.sydneyphilharmonia.com.au)

Sydney Symphony (☎ 8251 4600; www.sydneyssymphony.com)

JAZZ & BLUES

Basement (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9251 2797; www.thebasement.com.au; 29 Reiby Pl, Circular Quay; tickets from \$15; ☎ noon-1.30am Mon-Thu, to 2.30am Fri, 7.30pm-3am Sat, 7pm-1am Sun) Sydney's premier jazz venue presents big touring acts (Taj Mahal) and big local talent (Vince Jones, Mia Dyson). A

broad musical mandate also sees funk, blues and soul bands performing plus the odd spoken-word gig. Book a table by the stage.

Empire Hotel (Map p86; ☎ 9557 1701; www.empirelive.com.au; cnr Parramatta Rd & Johnston St, Annandale; tickets free-\$20; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Sat, 10am-midnight Sun) The Empire's 300-capacity bar gets down 'n' dirty with Sydney's best blues and roots. Local bands with loyal followings play free gigs; listen out for international artists and regular metal, ska, rockabilly, country-and-western and swing dancing nights!

Wine Banq (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9222 1919; www.winebanq.com.au; 53 Martin Pl; tickets from \$10; ☎ noon-late Tue-Fri, 6pm-late Sat) Carved out of an architect's book of dreams, this is the sexiest jazz room in Sydney. A brilliant wine list adds to the appeal. Past performers include Wynton Marsalis, James Morrison and Harry Connick Jr.

Soup Plus (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9299 7728; www.soupplus.com.au; cnr Margaret & Clarence Sts; tickets Mon-Thu \$10-12, dinner & show Fri & Sat \$35; ☎ 7.30pm Mon-Fri (live music), from 8.30pm Sat) Ditching its sweaty, low-altitude George St cellar for slick new digs was risky, but Soup Plus continues to lure city jazzniks with jazz, swing, big-band and a parade of vocal stylists. Raucous office groups shake the boss off their backs most nights.

ROCK

Annandale Hotel (Map p86; ☎ 9550 1078; www.annandalehotel.com; cnr Parramatta Rd & Nelson St, Annandale; tickets free-\$30; ☎ 11am-midnight Tue-Sat, to 10pm Sun, to 11pm Mon) The Annandale survived the live-music morgue in the '90s and now spearheads Sydney's rock revival, coughing up nightly alt-rock, metal, punk and electronica. Afroed punters traverse the sticky carpet between sets by Jet, the Dandy Warhols and Eskimo Joe. 'F*ck this, I'm going to the Annandale!'

Gaelic Club (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9211 1687; www.gaelicclub.com.au; 64 Devonshire St, Surry Hills; tickets \$10-30; ☎ varies with shows) Get your earwax blasted out at the Gaelic courtesy of iconic internationals like The Darkness and The Strokes, or home-grown sonic assailants like Wolfmother and Silverchair. It's a mid-size, split-level, multi-purpose affair – much beer and moshing.

Hopetoun Hotel (Map p84; ☎ 9361 5257; www.hopetounhotel.com.au; 416 Bourke St, Surry Hills; tickets free-\$15; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Sat, to 10pm Sun) Once the uncontested crucible for new Sydney rock bands, the diminutive 'Hoey' is still a launching pad for garage bands on the boil.

Enmore Theatre (Map p86; ☎ 9550 3666; www.enmoretheatre.com.au; 130 Enmore Rd, Newtown; tickets \$20-60; ☎ box office 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) Originally a vaudeville playhouse, the elegantly wasted Enmore now hosts alt-rockers like Queens of the Stone Age, Lou Reed and PJ Harvey. The 1600-capacity theatre feels like an old-time movie hall, with café, wooden floors, lounge areas and balconies.

Metro (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9287 2000; www.metrotheatre.com.au; 624 George St; tickets \$25-65; ☎ box office 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, noon-7pm Sat) Big-name indie acts grace the Metro's stage, like The Eels and well-chosen local rockers like The Butterfly Effect. International DJs lend weight to the cause. Theatre-style tiers, air-con, super sound and visibility: r-o-c-k ROCK!

Sandringham Hotel (Map p86; ☎ 9557 1254; fax 9517 9325; 387 King St, Newtown; tickets \$8-12; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Sat, to 10pm Sun) We were nervous the Sando's renovations would spell the end of live music here, but thankfully you can still get rocked from Tuesday to Sunday for not much money. Acoustic acts upstairs; Goth-metal night Sunday.

Vanguard (Map p86; ☎ 9557 7992; www.thevanguard.com.au; 42 King St, Newtown; dinner & show per person from \$36, general admission \$10-40; ☎ dinner from 7pm, music from 8pm) This place aspires to be freethinking, intellectual, and artistic. The intimate 1920s-themed band room satisfies these criteria; occasional Russell Crowe gigs do not... Most seats are reserved for dinner-and-show punters.

Sydney Entertainment Centre (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9320 4200; www.sydentent.com.au; 35 Harbour St, Haymarket; ticket prices vary with shows; ☎ box office 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Sydney's largest indoor venue holds 12,000 howling rock fans, recent acts including Coldplay, Snoop Dog, the Black Eyed Peas and Jamiroquai. Like most monster venues, the sound quality leaves a little to be desired.

Spectator Sports

Like to watch? On any given Sydney weekend there'll be all manner of balls being hurled, kicked and batted around, plus sailing on the harbour. Sydneysiders are excruciatingly passionate about the **National Rugby League** (NRL; www.nrl.com.au; tickets from Ticketek \$20-40), the season transpiring at suburban stadiums and Aussie Stadium (opposite), with September finals. The fever-inducing NSW vs. Queensland State of Origin series is played annually.

From March to September, 2005's premiership-winning Sydney Swans play in the **Australian Football League** (AFL; www.afl.com.au; tickets from Ticketmaster \$20-40) at the Sydney Cricket Ground and Telstra Stadium (below).

The **National Basketball League** (NBL; www.nbl.com.au; tickets from Ticketmaster \$10-60) season runs from April to November, the Sydney Kings playing at the Sydney Entertainment Centre (below).

The **cricket** (www.cricinfo.com) season runs from October to March, the Sydney Cricket Ground hosting interstate Pura Cup matches and sell-out international Test and World Series Cup matches.

Tennis NSW (☎ 9763 7644; www.tennissnw.com.au) has info on local tournaments and the Medibank International tournament at the Sydney International Tennis Centre (below) in the second week of January.

Out on the harbour, the 18ft-skiff racing season runs from September to March. The **Sydney Flying Squadron** (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9955 8350; www.sydneyflyingssquadron.com.au; 76 McDougall St, Milsons Point; adult/child \$15/5.50; ☎ 2-4.30pm Sat, Sep-Apr) conducts viewings.

Sydney's big-ticket sports venues include the following.

Aussie Stadium (Map p84; ☎ 9360 6601; www.aussiestadium.com; Driver Ave, Moore Park)

Sydney Cricket Ground (Map p84; ☎ 9360 6601; www.sydneycricketground.com.au; Driver Ave, Moore Park)

Sydney Entertainment Centre (opposite)

Sydney International Tennis Centre (Map p108; ☎ 8746 0777; www.sydneytennis.com.au; Rod Laver Dr, Olympic park, Homebush)

Telstra Stadium (Map p108; ☎ 8765 2000; www.telstrastadium.com.au; Olympic Blvd, Homebush Bay)

Theatre & Comedy

Company B (Map p84; ☎ 9699 3444; www.belvoir.com.au; Belvoir Street Theatre, 25 Belvoir St, Surry Hills; tickets from adult/concession \$48/30; ☎ box office 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 7.30pm Wed-Sat, 2.30-7.30pm Sun) Artistic director Neil Armfield is the darling of the Sydney theatre world. Cinema stars like Geoffrey Rush clamour to perform his adventurous, modern interpretations in the recently refurbished Belvoir St Theatre.

Sydney Comedy Store (Map p84; ☎ 9357 1419; www.comedystore.com.au; Entertainment Quarter, Lang Rd, Moore Park; tickets \$15-30; ☎ box office 10am-6pm Mon, to midnight Tue-Sat) This purpose-built comedy hall lures big-time Australian, overseas (US, Irish etc) and Edinburgh stand-ups and nurtures new talent with open-mic and 'New Comics' nights.

Sydney Theatre (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9250 1999; www.sydneytheatre.org.au; 22 Hickson Rd, Walsh Bay; tickets \$69-130; ☎ box office 9am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, from 11am Sat) Opening in 2004 with a name it seems odd no-one thought of before, the resplendent Sydney Theatre at the base of Observatory Hill puts 850 bums on seats for specialist drama and dance.

Sydney Theatre Company (STC; Map pp78-9; ☎ 9250 1777; www.sydneytheatre.com.au; Wharf Theatre, Pier 4, 5 Hickson Rd, Walsh Bay; tickets \$20-130; ☎ box office 9am-8.30pm, from 11am Sat) Working in tandem with the Sydney Theatre across the road, the STC is Sydney's premier theatre company. Major Australian actors (Barry Otto, Deborah Mailman) perform works by Alan Bennett, David Williamson and Shakespeare. Ask about \$20 'Student Rush' tickets. In late 2006 Cate Blanchett and hubby Andrew Upton joined the company as joint artistic directors.

Major theatres hosting West End and Broadway musicals, opera and concerts (tickets from \$50 to \$150) include:

Capitol Theatre (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9320 5000; www.capitoltheatre.com.au; 13 Campbell St, Haymarket; ☎ box office 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Lyric Theatre (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9657 8500; www.lyrictheatre.com.au; Star City Casino, 80 Pyrmont St, Pyrmont; ☎ box office 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, from 11am Sun)

State Theatre (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9373 6852; www.statetheatre.com.au; 49 Market St; ☎ box office 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 8pm performance nights)

Theatre Royal (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9224 8444; www.mlccentre.com.au; MLC Centre, 108 King St; ☎ box office Mon-Fri, 11am-8pm Sat, 1-8pm Sun)

SHOPPING

Sydneysiders treat shopping as a recreational activity rather than a necessity. Shopping in central Sydney is fast and furious – the CBD brims with department, chain and international fashion stores around **Pitt St Mall** (Map pp78-9). Much more chilled-out are inner-city shopping strips in Paddington, Glebe and Newtown – long, sinuous swathes of boutiques, cafés and bookshops. Paddington is designer heaven; for antiques head to Queen St, Woollahra. For music and retro fashion try Crown St, Surry Hills. There's a cluster of outdoor shops around the corner of Kent and Bathurst Sts in the city, while The Rocks oozes 'Australiana' (tacky souvenirs). Late-night shopping is on Thursday night – most stores stay open until 9pm.

The Sydney visual arts scene is edgy and competitive. If you have a free afternoon, swan around the **art galleries** (Glenmore Rd, Five Ways, Goodhope St, Gurner St) in Paddington's back streets or head to Waterloo's **Danks St** (Map p84) where a progressive crop of galleries has taken root.

Aboriginal Art

Artery (Map p82; ☎ 9380 8234; Shop 2, 221 Darlinghurst Rd, Darlinghurst) More art retail than art gallery, Artery deliberately steers away from the glitzy Sydney gallery scene, sourcing its contemporary, original selections from up-and-coming Central Australian artists. Prices are realistic and affordable, modern indigenous jewellery, hand-woven baskets and gorgeous canvases starting at \$25.

Gannon House (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9251 4474; 45 Argyle St, The Rocks) Purchasing works directly from Aboriginal communities, Gannon House (named after colonial builder Michael Gannon) takes an umbrella approach to its exhibits, jumbling Aboriginal artefacts, paintings and didgeridoos with contemporary white Australian abstract art. The results are disarmingly harmonious.

Gavala (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9212 7232; Shop 131, 1st fl, Harbourside Shopping Centre, Darling Harbour) Gavala sells only authentic indigenous products that are licensed, authorised or purchased directly from artists and communities, or both. It's 100% Aboriginal-owned, stirring up an outback vibe with a mind-boggling collation of paintings, boomerangs, didgeridoos, artefacts, books, clothing and CDs.

Hogarth Galleries (Map p84; ☎ 9360 6839; 7 Walker La, Paddington) A cultural beacon in an obscure Paddington laneway, Hogarth Galleries has

been supporting and promoting Aboriginal art since 1972. Honouring established artists and sourcing up-and-comers, Hogarth exhibits contemporary dot paintings, basketry, framed prints, fabrics, spears and didgeridoos.

Australiana

Australian Wine Centre (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9247 2755; Shop 3, Goldfields House, 1 Alfred St, Circular Quay) This basement store is packed with quality Australian wine, beer and spirits. Pick up some Yellowgleng for a bubbly night or organise a shipment of Ninth Island Pinot Noir back home. Healthy wallets can access Cuban cigars and a swaggering range of Penfold's Grange wines.

Flame Opals (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9247 3446; 119 George St, The Rocks) If you've been seduced by shimmering opals, this is the place to consummate the relationship. Prices range from about \$20 to 'If you have to ask, you can't afford it...'. There's a tax-free concession for overseas customers.

RM Williams (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9262 2228; 389 George St) Urban cowboys and country folk can't get enough of this hard-wearing outback gear. It's the kind of stuff prime ministers don when they want to seem sincere about something, whilst referring to it as 'clobber'. Favourites include oilskin jackets, Akubra hats, moleskin jeans and leather work boots.

Strand Hatters (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9231 6884; Shop 8, Strand Arcade, 412 George St) Got a cold/wet head? Strand Hatters will cover your crown with a classically Australian Akubra bush hat (made from rabbit felt). Staff block and steam hats to customers' cranial requirements (crocodile-teeth hatbands cost extra).

Clothes

Calibre (Map p84; ☎ 9380 5993; 398 Oxford St, Paddington) Hip, high-calibre Calibre fills the wardrobes of Sydney's power players with schmick suits in seasonal fabrics and colours, plus brand-name sunnies, shoes, ties and briefcases. Gordon Gecko eat your heart out.

Leona Edmiston (Map p84; ☎ 9331 7033; 88 William St, Paddington) With two new stores in LA, Leona Edmiston clearly knows a thing or two about dresses. Her designs have been described as exuberantly feminine, flirtatious and fun, cut from the best cottons, silks and jerseys. Colours range from luscious, sophisticated reds to pinstripes and polka dots.

Scanlan & Theodore (Map p84; ☎ 9380 9388; 122 Oxford St, Paddington) Regularly topping with-it gals' lists of favourite designers, Scanlan & Theodore excel in beautifully-made pieces for the evening or the office, with fabrics you just can't help but fondle.

Zimmerman Swim (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9387 5111; Shop 3048, Westfield Shopping Centre, 500 Oxford St, Bondi Junction) Half of Bondi's boobs and bums are clad in Zimmerman swimwear – they understand that Sydneysiders spend a lot of time in the surf, but still want to look sexy.

Some other divine designers to check out include these ones.

Alannah Hill (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9221 1251; Level 1, Strand Arcade, 412 George St) Feather boas, fishnet stockings and diaphanous cocktail dresses.

Bracewell (Map p84; ☎ 9331 5844; 274 Oxford St, Paddington) Structured and sassy; Mavi and Sass & Bide jeans.

Collette Dinnigan (Map p84; ☎ 9360 6691; 33 William St, Paddington) Flouncy beaded dresses popular with Hollywood's Aussie gals.

Morrissey (Map p84; ☎ 9380 4722; 372 Oxford St, Paddington) Sexy, high-heeled style – bring your gold credit card.

Wayne Cooper (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9221 5292; 1st fl, Strand Arcade, 412 George St) Release your inner vixen in devilish gear.

Markets

Balmain Market (Map pp76-7; ☎ 0418 765 736; cnr Darling St & Curtis Rd, Balmain; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Sat) Milling around the shady grounds of St Andrews Congregational, stalls selling arts, crafts, books, clothing, jewellery, plants and fruit and veg jumble together like socks in a drawer. The church itself is open if you want a Middle Eastern snack or need to consult St Andy about a prospective purchase.

Bondi Markets (Map p87; ☎ 9315 8988; Bondi Beach Public School, cnr Campbell Pde & Warners Ave, Bondi; ☎ 9am-4pm Sun) 'Remember the days of the old school yard? We used to laugh a lot...' The kids are at the beach on Sundays while their school fills up with Bondi funksters rummaging through funky second-hand clothes and books, hippy beads and earrings, aromatherapy oils, candles, old Cat Stevens records...

Glebe Markets (Map p86; ☎ 4237 7499; Glebe Public School, cnr Glebe Point Rd & Derby Pl, Glebe; ☎ 9am-4pm Sat) Sydney's dreadlocked, shoeless, inner-city contingent beats a hazy course to this crowded market. Once massaged, fuelled on lentil burgers and swathed in funky retro

gear, they retreat to the lawns, pass the peace pipe and chill out to an African drum soundtrack.

Paddington Market (Map p84; ☎ 9331 2923; St John's Church, 395 Oxford St, Paddington; ☎ 10am-4pm Sat) Sydney's most-attended weekend market congregates around Paddington Uniting Church, offering up everything from vintage clothes and hip fashions to jewellery, books, massage and palmistry. Parking is a misery – take public transport.

Paddy's Markets (Map pp78-9; ☎ 1300 361 589; cnr Hay & Thomas Sts, Haymarket; ☎ 9am-5pm Thu-Sun) Paddy's is the Sydney equivalent of Istanbul's Grand Bazaar, but swap the incense, hookahs and carpets for mobile phone covers, Eminem T-shirts and cheap sneakers. There are over 1000 stalls in this capitalist cavern – pick up a VB singlet for uncle Bruce or just wander the aisles in awe.

Rocks Market (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9240 8717; George St, The Rocks near Sydney Harbour Bridge; ☎ 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) Under a long white canopy, the 150 stalls here are a little on the tacky side of the tracks (fossils, opals, faux-Aboriginal art etc) but are still worth a gander.

Shopping Centres & Department Stores

David Jones (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9266 5544; cnr Market & Castlereagh Sts) In two enormous city buildings, DJs is Sydney's premier department store. The Market St store has menswear, electrical and a highbrow food court; Castlereagh St has women's and children's wear and a friendly concierge to point you in the right direction.

Myer (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9238 9111; cnr George & Market Sts) Formerly the dowdy Grace Bros, Myer has made a concerted effort to liven things up a bit. Over seven floors, there's everything from hip fashions (Wayne Cooper, Seduce, Chloe) to big-name cosmetics (Chanel, Lancôme, Clinique), plus lingerie, sunglasses and a café.

Queen Victoria Building (QVB; Map pp78-9; ☎ 9265 6869; 455 George St) The QVB is a magnificent high-Victorian masterpiece occupying an entire city block. Yeah, sure, the 200 speciality shops are great, but check out the wrought-iron balconies, stained-glass shopfronts, mosaic floors, tinkling baby grand and hyper-kitsch animated Royal Clock (featuring the Battle of Hastings and hourly beheading of King Charles I).

Strand Arcade (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9232 4199; 412 George St & 193-5 Pitt St Mall) Constructed in 1891 in a squeeze

BUYING INDIGENOUS ART

Most of Sydney's amazing indigenous art comes from elsewhere in Australia. To ensure you're not perpetuating a non-indigenous cash-in on Aboriginal art's popularity, make sure you're buying from an authentic dealer selling original art, and if the gallery doesn't pay their artists upfront, ask exactly how much of your money will make it back to the artist or community. Another good test is to request some biographical info on the artists – if the vendor can't produce it, keep walking.

space between George and Pitt Sts, the Strand Arcade rivals the QVB for ornateness. Three floors of designer fashions, Australiana and old-world coffee shops will make your shortcut through here considerably longer.

Westfield Bondi Junction (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9947 8000; 500 Oxford St, Bondi Junction) This slick new mall claims to be the biggest in Oz; definitely the biggest in Sydney. With more than 300 shops over six shiny levels, it's brought style and chutzpah to slovenly Bondi Junction: David Jones, Myer, street fashion, jewellery, books, music, cinemas and valet parking.

World Square (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9262 7926; cnr George & Liverpool Sts) The old Anthony Horden & Sons department store on this site was demolished in the '80s, but it's taken 20 years for World Square to emerge in its place. City-slickers have been rewarded for their patience with coffee shops, sushi bars, shoe shops and a huge Rebel Sport outlet with every conceivable bat and ball.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Sydney's **Kingsford Smith Airport** (Map pp76-7; ☎ 9667 9111; www.sydneyairport.com.au) is Australia's busiest, so don't be surprised if there are delays. It's only 10km south of the city centre, making access easy, but this also means that flights cease between 11pm and 5am due to noise regulations. The T1 (international) and T2 and T3 (domestic) terminals are a 4km, \$5 bus or train ride apart.

You can fly into Sydney from all the usual international points and from within Australia. Both **Qantas** (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) and **Virgin** (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au) have frequent flights to other capital cities. Smaller Qantas-affiliated airlines fly to smaller Oz destinations.

Bus

All private interstate and regional bus travellers arrive at **Sydney Coach Terminal** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9281 9366; Central Station, Eddy Ave; ☎ 6am-10.30pm). The government's CountryLink rail network is also complemented by coaches. Most buses stop in the suburbs on the way in and out of Sydney. If you hold a VIP or YHA discount card, shop around the major bus companies with offices here:

Firefly (☎ 1300 730 740; www.fireflyexpress.com.au)

Greyhound (☎ 13 14 99; www.greyhound.com.au)

Murrays (☎ 13 22 51; www.murrays.com.au)

Train

Sydney's main rail terminus for **CountryLink** interstate and regional services is **Central Station** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 13 22 32; www.countrylink.info; Eddy Ave; ☎ staffed ticket booths 6am-10pm, ticket machines 24hr). Call for information, reservations and arrival/departure times. CountryLink discounts often nudge 40% on economy fares – sometimes cheaper than buses!

GETTING AROUND

For bus, ferry and train information, timetables and fare deals, call the Sydney Transit Authority's **Transport Infoline** (STA; ☎ 13 15 00) or check www.131500.com.au.

To/From the Airport

BUS

Bookings are essential for the following services.

Kingsford Smith Transport (☎ 9666 9988; single/return \$10/18; ☎ 5am-11pm) Connecting the airport and central Sydney hotels.

Manly Airport Bus (☎ 0500 505 800; single/return \$30/63; ☎ 5am-11pm) A door-to-door service to/from Manly.

TAXI

A ride to/from Circular Quay should cost from \$25 to \$35; to/from Central Station from \$20 to \$30.

TRAIN

Airport Link (☎ 13 15 00; www.airportlink.com.au; single/return from Central Station to domestic terminal \$12/18, to international terminal \$13/19; ☎ every 10-15min, 5am-midnight daily) runs from city train stations; return fares are cheaper after 9am and on weekends. A one-way trip takes about 15 minutes.

Boat

FERRY

Sydney transport's most civilised option – harbour ferries, JetCats (to Manly) and RiverCats (to Parramatta) – depart Circular Quay. Most ferries operate from 6am to midnight; those servicing tourist attractions operate shorter hours. The Circular Quay **Ferry Information Office** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9207 3170; www.sydneyferries.info; ☎ 7am-5.45pm Mon-Sat, 8am-5.45pm Sun) has details. Many ferries have connecting bus services.

A one-way inner-harbour ride on a regular ferry costs adult/concession \$5/3. A one-way ride to Manly on the JetCat costs \$8 (no concession, 15 minutes, half-hourly). A one-

way RiverCat ride to Parramatta costs adult/concession \$8/4 (50 minutes, hourly).

WATER TAXI

Water taxis ply dedicated shuttle routes; rides to/from other harbour venues can be booked.

Yellow Water Taxis (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9555 9778; www.yellowwatertaxis.com.au; ☎ 7am-midnight) Circular Quay to Darling Harbour adult/child \$13/8; 40-minute Harbour Tours adult/child \$25/15.

Watertours (Map pp78-9; ☎ 9211 7730; www.watertours.com.au; ☎ 9.30am-11pm) Opera House to Darling Harbour adult/child \$15/10; one hour Harbour and Nightlights Tours adult/child \$30/20.

Bus

Sydney buses run almost everywhere. Bondi, Coogee and parts of the North Shore are serviced only by bus. Nightrider buses operate skelately after regular services cease around midnight.

The main city bus stops are Circular Quay, Wynyard Park (York St) and Railway Sq. Buy tickets from newsagents, Bus TransitShops and on buses. Pay the driver as you enter, or dunk prepaid tickets in ticket machines by the door. Fares start at \$1.70; most trips are under \$3.50. There are **Bus TransitShops** at Circular Quay (Map pp78-9; www.sydneybuses.info; cnr Alfred & Loftus Sts; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-5pm Sat & Sun), Wynyard Station (Map pp78-9; Carrington St), Railway Sq (Map pp78-9; George St), and the Queen Victoria Building (Map pp78-9; York St).

Bus routes starting with an X indicate limited-stop express routes; those with an L have limited stops. Most buses depart the city on George or Castlereagh Sts, ploughing down George or Elizabeth Sts on the way back in.

Car & Motorcycle

BUYING OR SELLING A CAR

The second-hand car industry is a minefield of mistrust and dodgy wheelers-and-dealers, but with a bit of research you can still land a decent deal. Parramatta Rd is lined with used-car lots, and the *Trading Post* (www.tradingpost.com.au), a weekly rag available at newsagents, lists second-hand vehicles.

Always read the fine print when buying or selling a car. Some dealers will sell you a car with an undertaking to buy it back at an agreed price – don't accept verbal guarantees, get it in writing. The **Register of Encumbered Vehicles** (REVS; ☎ 13 32 20; www.revs.nsw.gov.au) is a

government organisation that can check to ensure the car you're buying is fully paid-up and owned by the seller.

Before you buy any vehicle, regardless of the vendor, we strongly recommend you have it checked by a competent mechanic – we've heard horror stories from readers whose trusty steeds have proved to be not-so-trusty. The National Roads & Motorists Association (NRMA; p52) organises inspections and provides 24-hour emergency roadside assistance for members, with reciprocal arrangements with motoring organisations overseas and interstate.

Companies who specialise in buying and selling cars to/from travellers include:

Kings Cross Car Market (Map p82; ☎ 1800 808 188; www.carmarket.com.au; car park Level 2, cnr Ward Ave & Elizabeth Bay Rd, Kings Cross; ☎ 9am-5pm Sun-Thu, 9am-4pm Fri & Sat) Park your machine in the car park and wait for a buyer. Potentially hit-and-miss, but always busy.

Travellers Autobarn (Map pp78-9; ☎ 1800 674 374; www.travellers-autobarn.com.au; 177 William St, Kings Cross; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-3pm Sun) Guaranteed buyback, warranties and insurance available.

RENTAL

Expect to pay around \$70 per day for a zippy small car. Rates sometimes include insurance and unlimited kilometres; some companies require you to be over 25 years old. At the time of writing petrol cost around \$1.45 per litre, and was steadily rising.

If you're looking to hire a campervan, **Wicked Campers** (Map p108; ☎ 1800 246 869; www.wickedcampers.com.au; 5 Tenterden Rd, Botany; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) rents out spectacularly painted vehicles with room in the back where you can sleep. The following stalwarts also have vans (and regular cars) at their airport and city branches.

Avis (☎ 13 63 33; www.avis.com.au)

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

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

Hertz (☎ 13 30 39; www.hertz.com.au)

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

The *Yellow Pages* lists many other car-hire companies, some specialising in renting clapped-out wrecks at rock-bottom prices – read the fine print!

Bikescape (Map p86; ☎ 1300 736 869; www.bikescape.com.au; 183 Parramatta Rd, Annandale; per day from \$80; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9-10am & 4-5pm Sat) rents out well-serviced, low mileage motorcycles and scooters. The savvy staff can also organise tours.

ROAD TOLLS

There's a \$3 southbound toll on the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Tunnel. If you're heading from the North Shore to the Eastern Suburbs, it's easier to take the tunnel. There's a \$4 northbound toll on the Eastern Distributor; the infamous Cross City Tunnel costs \$3.50 one-way. Sydney's main motorways (M1, M2, M4, M5 and M7) are also tolled (\$2.20 to \$3.80). There are cash booths at toll gates, but the whole system will soon be electronic – check www.rta.nsw.gov.au for the latest info.

Fare Deals

The **SydneyPass** (www.sydneypass.info) offers three, five or seven days unlimited travel over a week on STA buses, ferries and the rail network's Red TravelPass zone (inner suburbs). Passes include the Airport Express, Sydney and Bondi Explorer buses, JetCats, RiverCats and STA-run harbour cruises. They cost adult/child/family \$100/55/275 (three days), \$145/70/360 (five days) and \$165/80/410 (seven days). Buy passes from STA, train stations, Bus TransitShops, the Sydney Visitor Centre at The Rocks (p52) or Airport Express and Explorer bus drivers.

TravelPasses offer unlimited rail, bus and ferry rides at cheap weekly rates. There are various colour-coded grades offering combinations of distance and service. A weekly Red TravelPass (inner suburbs) available at train stations, STA offices, Bus TransitShops and newsagents costs adult/concession \$33/17.

If you're just catching buses, a **TravelTen** ticket from newsagents and Bus TransitShops offers 10 discounted bus trips. There are various colour codes for different distances; a Red TravelTen ticket (inner suburbs) costs adult/concession \$30/15. **FerryTen** tickets from the Circular Quay ticket office are also good value – 10 inner-harbour rides for adult/concession \$33/17. **DayTripper** tickets letting you ride most inner-suburban trains, buses and ferries cost adult/concession \$16/8.

Several transport-plus-entry tickets available from the Circular Quay Ferry Information Office (p104) work out cheaper than catching a return ferry and paying entry separately. These include the **ZooPass** (adult/child/concession \$39/21/34) and the **AquariumPass** (adult/child/family \$33/17/81).

Monorail & Metro Light Rail (MLR)

The privately operated **Metro Monorail** (☎ 9285 5600; www.metromonorail.com.au; single circuit \$5, day pass

adult/family \$9/22; 🕒 every 4min, 7am-10pm Mon-Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat, 8am-10pm Sun) is a lugubrious elevated worm circling around Darling Harbour and the city. The full loop takes about 14 minutes.

Also privately run, the future-slick **Metro Light Rail** (MLR: ☎ 9285 5600; www.metrolightrail.com.au; Zone 1 adult/concession \$3/2, Zone 1 & 2 adult/concession \$4/3, day pass adult/concession \$9/7; 🕒 24hr, every 15min 6am-midnight, every 30min midnight-6am) glides between Central Station and Pyrmont via Chinatown and Darling Harbour. The Zone 2 service beyond Pyrmont to Lilyfield stops at 11pm Sunday to Thursday, midnight Friday and Saturday. Purchase tickets on board.

Note that the SydneyPass (left) isn't valid on the Monorail or MLR.

Taxi

Taxis and cab ranks proliferate in Sydney. Flag fall is \$2.80, then it's \$1.62 per kilometre (plus 20% from 10pm to 6am). The waiting charge is 68c per minute. Passengers must pay bridge, tunnel and road tolls (even if you don't incur them 'outbound', the returning driver will incur them 'inbound').

Major taxi companies that offer phone bookings (\$1.40 fee) include these ones.

Arrow Taxis (☎ 13 22 11)

Legion (☎ 13 14 51)

Premier Cabs (☎ 13 10 17)

Taxis Combined (☎ 8332 8888)

Train

Sydney's vast suburban rail network is the deft way to get around. Lines radiate from the underground City Circle (seven city-centre stations), but don't service the Northern and Southern Beaches, Balmain or Glebe. All suburban trains stop at Central Station, and usually one or more of the other City Circle stations too.

Trains run from around 5am to midnight. On weekends and after 9am on weekdays you can buy an off-peak return ticket, valid until 4am the next day, for little more than a standard one-way fare.

Twenty-four-hour ticket machines occupy most stations but humans are usually available too if you'd rather talk to something that'll listen. If you have to change trains, buy a ticket to your ultimate destination, but don't exit the transfer station en route or your ticket will be invalid.

For train information, visit the **CityRail Information Booth** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 13 15 00; www.131500.com.au; Wharf 5, Circular Quay; 🕒 9.05am-4.50pm).

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