

BACKGROUND

HISTORY

ABORIGINAL SETTLEMENT

Australia was the last great landmass to be claimed by Europeans, but the first inhabitants of this country were here for tens of thousands of years before the First Fleet stomped a foot down under. Australian Aboriginal society has the longest continuous cultural history in the world, its origins dating to at least the last ice age. Although mystery shrouds many aspects of Australian prehistory, it is thought that the first humans probably came here across the sea from Southeast Asia more than 50,000 years ago.

Archaeological evidence suggests that descendants of these first settlers colonised the continent within a few thousand years. They were the first people in the world to make polished, edge-ground, stone tools; to cremate their dead; and to engrave and paint representations of themselves and the animals they hunted.

Aborigines were traditionally tribal people, living in extended family groups. Knowledge and skills obtained over millennia enabled them to use their environment extensively and in a sustainable manner. Their intimate knowledge of animal behaviour and plant harvesting ensured that food shortages were rare.

The simplicity of the Aborigines' technology contrasted with their sophisticated cultural life. Religion, history, law and art were integrated in complex ceremonies, which not only depicted ancestral beings who created the land and its people, but also prescribed codes of behaviour. Aborigines continue to perform traditional ceremonies in many parts of Australia.

When the British arrived at Sydney Cove in 1788 there were probably somewhere between 500,000 and one million Aborigines in Australia, and between 200 and 250 distinct regional languages. Governor Arthur Phillip estimated that around 1500 Aborigines lived around Sydney at first contact, although figures are unreliable.

The coastal people around Sydney were known as the Eora (which literally means 'from this place'). Cadigal people lived in the Sydney area, but their population was soon ravaged by small-pox introduced by the European settlers. Three main languages were used by Aborigines in the area, encompassing several dialects and subgroups. Although there was considerable overlap, Ku-ring-gai was generally spoken on the northern shore, Dharawal along the coast south of Botany Bay, and Dharug and its dialects on the plains at the foot of the Blue Mountains.

top picks

WEBSITES TO UNRAVEL SYDNEY'S PAST

- www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/barani
Great background from the city council on the story of Sydney's Aboriginal population.
- www.dictionaryofsydney.org
A major online project to document all aspects of Sydney.
- <http://firstfleet.uow.edu.au>
A comprehensive, absorbing University of Wollongong project to tell the First Fleet story.
- www.nla.gov.au/oz/histsite.html
National Library Of Australia resources.

TIMELINE

40,000 BC

The Eora people live in Sydney, hunting and painting rock art, split into separate tribes including the Dharug-speaking Cadigal band in Sydney Cove

AD 1770

Captain James Cook lands at Botany Bay and claims Australia for the British Crown; he writes of the indigenous population: 'all they seem'd to want was us to be gone'

1788

The First Fleet drops anchor in Botany Bay, followed by *la Pèrouse* five days later; the English decide Botany Bay is unsuitable and head to Port Jackson, pitching their tents in Sydney Cove

As Aboriginal society was based on tribal family groups, a coordinated response to the European colonisers wasn't possible. Without any 'legal right' to the lands they once lived on, Aborigines became dispossessed. Some were driven away by force, some were killed, many were shifted onto government reserves and missions, and thousands succumbed to foreign diseases introduced by the Europeans.

Communities that had survived for millennia before the arrival of the settlers were changed – sometimes shattered – forever.

THE EUROPEANS COME KNOCKING

When the American War of Independence disrupted the transportation of convicts to North America, Britain lost its main dumping ground for undesirables and needed somewhere else to chuck them. Joseph Banks, who had been Captain James Cook's scientific leader during the expedition in 1770, piped up with the suggestion that Botany Bay would be a fine new site for criminals.

TALES OF FIRST CONTACT: PEMULWUY

Aboriginal resistance to European colonisation was a subject long glossed over in Australian history books, although it began pretty much at first contact. Dutch sailors in the early 17th century had violent run-ins on the west coast, and after Captain Cook came ashore in 1770 and had a rock chucked at him, he wrote of the locals 'all they seem'd to want was us to be gone'.

Pemulwuy, a member of the Bidjigal group of Dharug speakers from near Botany Bay, very much wanted the British to be gone. He was around 20 years old when Cook visited, and pushing 40 by the time Arthur Phillip and the new arrivals from the First and Second Fleets had begun killing and kidnapping his countrymen and generally acting like they owned the place.

Pemulwuy branded himself as a troublemaker in 1790 by spearing to death Governor Phillip's game shooter. The shooter, John McIntyre, was a convict who reportedly brutalised Aboriginal people, but this didn't stop Phillip from threatening a bloody revenge. He sent out the first-ever punitive force against the locals, at first with orders to kill 10 Bidjigals and bring their heads back to Sydney in sacks. Phillip soon relented and issued milder orders to capture six for possible hanging.

The mission was an utter flop in any case, and Pemulwuy's 12 years as leader of the struggle against the British began in earnest. At first he limited his guerrilla campaign to small, sporadic raids on farms, stealing livestock and crops, but eventually worked up to leading attacks by groups of more than a hundred men – a huge number, by Aboriginal standards of the time.

During his lifetime Pemulwuy survived being shot, as well as having his skull fractured in a rumble with the enormous 'Black Caesar', a bushranger of African descent. He thoroughly cemented his reputation in 1797 in a bloody battle against soldiers and settlers at Parramatta. During the fracas, Pemulwuy took seven pellets of buckshot to the head and body and went down. Bleeding severely and near death, he was captured and placed in hospital. Within weeks he managed to escape, while still wearing the leg irons he'd been shackled with.

Pemulwuy's luck ran out in 1802, when he was ambushed and shot dead. It's not entirely clear by whom, but there was a price on Pemulwuy's head – which was cut off, pickled in alcohol and sent to England. (A similar fate befell Yagan, an Aboriginal resistance leader in southwestern Australia, some 30 years later.) Pemulwuy's son Tedbury carried on the fight until 1805.

For further reading on Pemulwuy, check out *Pemulwuy: The Rainbow Warrior*, by Eric Willmot.

TALES OF FIRST CONTACT: BENNELONG

Pemulwuy's story (opposite) is in stark contrast to that of another Aborigine who became famous for his association with the British settlers. Bennelong was born around 1764 into the Wangal tribe, the westerly neighbours of the Cadigal who lived in the area around central Sydney. He was captured in 1789, and brought to Governor Arthur Phillip, who was hoping to use Bennelong to understand the local Aborigines' customs and language. Bennelong took to life with the white settlers, developing a taste for alcohol, food and learning to speak the language of his new masters. Eventually he escaped, but had returned by 1791 when reassured that he would not be held against his will. He developed a strong friendship with Governor Phillip, who had a brick hut built for him on what is now Bennelong Point. In 1792, Bennelong went on a 'civilising' trip to England, and returned in 1795 with a changed dress sense and altered behaviour. Described as good natured, and stoutly made, Bennelong ultimately was no longer accepted by his countrymen and never really found happiness with his white friends either. He died a broken, dispossessed man in 1813, probably as a result of his affection for the bottle.

The First Fleet landed at Botany Bay in January 1788. This motley group comprised 11 ships carrying 730 male and female convicts, 400 sailors, four companies of marines, and enough livestock and booze to last two years. Captain Arthur Phillip, eager to be the colony's first governor, didn't take to Botany Bay's meagre natural supplies. He weighed anchor after only a few days and sailed 25km north to the harbour Cook had named Port Jackson (now known as Sydney Harbour), where he discovered a crucial source of fresh water in what is now Sydney Cove. The day was 26 January 1788, now celebrated as Australia Day.

The settlers liked Sydney Cove much better and from here the town of Sydney grew. Word spread, and the Second Fleet came around in 1790 with more convicts and supplies. A year later, following the landing of the Third Fleet, Sydney's population had swollen to around 4000. The early days of the colony weren't for softies and the threat of starvation hung over the settlement for at least 16 years.

Convicts were put to work on farms, roads and government building projects, but Governor Phillip was convinced that the colony wouldn't progress if it relied solely on convict blood and sweat. He believed prosperity depended on attracting free settlers, to whom convicts would be assigned as labourers, and on the granting of land to officers, soldiers and worthy emancipists (convicts who had served their time). In 1791 James Ruse was the first former convict to be granted land by Governor Phillip. He was given 12 hectares as reward for his successful work in agriculture (see p119).

When Governor Phillip had had enough, Francis Grose took over. Grose granted land to officers of the New South Wales Corps, nicknamed the Rum Corps. With so much money, land and cheap labour in their hot little hands, this military leadership made huge profits at the expense of small farmers. They began paying for labour and local products in rum. Meeting little resistance, they managed to upset, defy, outmanoeuvre and outlast three governors, including William Bligh, the unlucky leader of the infamous *Bounty*.

The Rum Rebellion was the final straw for the British government, and in 1809 it decided to punish its unruly child. Lieutenant Colonel Lachlan Macquarie was dispatched with his own regiment and ordered the New South Wales Corps to return to London to get their knuckles rapped. Having broken the stranglehold of the Rum Corps, Governor Macquarie began laying the groundwork for social reforms.

1791

It's estimated that only three Cadigal people survive; many were wiped out by smallpox that arrived with the First Fleet, which the Cadigal had no natural immunity to

1842

Convict transportation effectively ceases in New South Wales; over the course of the previous half century 150,000 people had been dumped in the colony

1900

Bubonic plague kills 103 people in Sydney's overcrowded and unhygienic slums; as a result, large areas of substandard housing are cleared and rebuilt

1902

Women are granted the right to vote; this same right is not extended to the indigenous Aborigines until almost 70 years later

1908

South Sydney wins the first Rugby League premiership, beating Eastern Suburbs (now Sydney City Roosters) and starting a rivalry between the clubs that survives today

1932

Sydney's second-most-famous icon, the Harbour Bridge, opens; the structure is immediately loved dearly by Sydneysiders for both aesthetic and practical reasons

WILD COLONIAL BOYS

In 1800 Sydney Cove was still the only European settlement on the Australian mainland. Inroads were only made into the vast interior of the continent in the ensuing 40 years.

In 1851 the discovery of large gold deposits near Bathurst, 200km west of Sydney, caused an exodus of hopeful miners from the city and forced the government to abandon the law of ownership of gold discoveries. Instead, it introduced a compulsory digger's licence fee of 30 shillings a month. Controversially, the fee was payable whether the miner found gold or not, to ensure the country earned revenue from the incredible wealth being unearthed.

Another massive gold rush in Victoria shortly afterwards kept Sydney (the capital of NSW) of secondary size and importance to Melbourne (the capital of the southern colony of Victoria). This lasted from the 1850s until the economic depression of the 1890s... and so the Sydney–Melbourne rivalry began (see p39).

MOVING INTO THE 20TH CENTURY

The Commonwealth of Australia came into being on 1 January 1901, and NSW became a state of the new Australian nation. However, Australia's legal ties with, loyalty to and dependency on Britain remained strong. When WWI broke out in Europe, Australian troops were sent to fight in the trenches of France, at Gallipoli in Turkey and in the Middle East. Although almost 60,000 of the 330,000 troops perished in the war, for Australia this was a first test of physical stamina and strength – and they held their own. A renewed patriotism cemented the country's confidence in itself. But, in the wake of so much slaughter, many Australians also questioned their relationship with their old colonial rulers – ties between Britain and Australia were never quite the same.

If Australia was now notionally independent, the same sadly could not be said for its indigenous peoples. From 1910 to the end of the 1960s, a sinister policy of 'cultural assimilation' allowed Aborigine children (usually of mixed race) to be removed from their families. Around 100,000 children were separated from their mothers and fathers in this way – 'the stolen generation' – causing untold stress and damage to the nation's indigenous community. The 2002 movie *Rabbit Proof Fence* is a moving portrayal of this shameful episode in Australia's past.

Meanwhile, Australia's economy continued to grow in the 1920s until the Great Depression hit the country hard. By 1932, however, Australia was starting to recover as a result of rises in wool prices and a revival of manufacturing. With the opening of the Harbour Bridge in the same year, Sydney's building industry revived and its northern suburbs began to develop.

In the years before WWII, Australia became increasingly fearful of the threat to national security posed by expansionist Japan. When war broke out, Australian troops again fought beside the British in Europe. Only after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor did Australia's own national security begin to take priority. A boom with a net barrage was stretched across the entrance channels of Sydney Harbour and gun fortifications were set up on the rocky headlands.

Sydney escaped WWII comparatively unscathed, although on 31 May 1942 several Japanese midget submarines were destroyed after becoming trapped in the harbour boom. A week later, another Japanese submarine entered the harbour, sank a small supply vessel and lobbed a few shells into the suburbs of Bondi and Rose Bay.

Ultimately, US victory in the Battle of the Coral Sea helped protect Australia from a Japanese invasion and pushed along Australia's shift of allegiance from mother Britain to the USA.

THE CHINESE IN SYDNEY & AUSTRALIA

Colourful Sydney and many other large cities have come to realise the benefits of having a multicultural society, but Australia hasn't always been so racially tolerant (and still has a way to go, in fact).

Chinese immigrants started to come to Australia around 1840, when convict shipments were decreasing and labouring jobs became more freely available. Initially Chinese immigrants were considered a solution to the labour shortages, but as gold rush greed came on racial intolerance grew. The tireless Chinese were seen as competitive threats, and state entry restrictions were in place from the early 19th century into much of the 20th century. In 1861 the NSW Government put in place the now shameful 'White Australia Policy', aimed at reducing the influx of Chinese immigrants. This included a refusal of naturalisation, restricted work permits and acts such as the 1861 *Chinese Immigration Regulation and Restriction Act* (a tax on Chinese immigrants). As a result of this policy (and the fact many Chinese returned to China after the gold rush), the Chinese population remained low.

Sydney's Chinese community eventually gravitated to Dixon St, and soon this area became a bustling commercial centre known for its opium dens and gambling. While the opium dens are long gone, you'll still find plenty of action in the area (now called Chinatown), along with plenty of Australians of Chinese descent. For the traveller, this translates into some really tasty and great-value food. One of the country's most renowned chefs, Kylie Kwong, is from the largest Chinese family in Australia and a proud Sydneysider. She describes herself as '29th-generation Kwong and fifth-generation Australian'.

The aftermath of WWII, along with postwar immigration programs, made Australia more appealing to migrants from Britain, Germany, Italy, Poland, Greece and Ireland, among other places. Australia experienced new growth and prosperity, and Sydney's population spurted. The city's borders rapidly spread west.

Despite the influx of these new immigrants and a strong trade-union movement, Australia came to accept the US view that communism threatened the increasingly Americanised Australian way of life. In 1965 the Liberal Party government sent troops to serve in the Vietnam War, even when Britain did not.

During these Vietnam War years the face of Sydney changed as American GIs flooded the city for rest and recreation (R&R). Kings Cross became an entertaining playground for US troops on leave, sealing its sleazy reputation as a den of drinking and bordellos. Meanwhile, civil unrest over the issue of conscription eventually helped bring about the election of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in 1972, the first time in 23 years that it had been in power.

Aborigines took part in this vote, only the second time they were able to participate in an Australian general election. It wasn't until 1967 that a national referendum was held on whether to allow Aboriginal people the right to vote. More than 90% of white Australians voted in favour.

THE TRANSITION TO THE NEW MILLENNIUM

The Sydney basking in the afterglow of the magnificent 2000 Olympic Games is quite different from the city of the mid-1970s. Many Sydneysiders were feeling shackled by old British ties, especially in the wake of the shock ousting of Labor Party Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in 1975. The controversy was all about the man who sacked him, Governor General John Kerr. As the British monarch's representative, Kerr was not an Australian-elected official and highlighted the influence the former colonial rulers still wielded.

1959

Construction of the much-admired Sydney Opera House commences; it won't be opened until 1973, after a long and eventful period of construction

1984

Homosexuality is decriminalised in NSW; however, an equal age of consent with heterosexuals will not be achieved until almost 20 years later in 2003

1994

Four people die in a series of horrific bushfires circling Sydney; the Woods Royal Commission, investigating police corruption, commences

2000

Sydney stages a dazzling Olympic Games, at which Australia wins 16 gold medals, placing the country fourth after the US, Russia and China

2003

Linda Burney, a member of the 'stolen generation' who first met her father at age 28, becomes the first indigenous member of the New South Wales state parliament

2007

Morris Iemma is re-elected as New South Wales State Premier, after taking on the reins following Bob Carr's retirement in 2005

During Whitlam's shortened reign, the Australian government had withdrawn Australian troops from Vietnam and abolished national service. Another legacy of Whitlam's more tolerant government was the waves of immigrants that settled in Sydney, often defining a certain area – the Vietnamese in Cabramatta and the Chinese in Ashfield, for example.

A booming 1980s economy saw Sydney skyscrapers shoot up, while the Bicentennial celebrations in 1988 also boosted the city's confidence. A subsequent bust in 1989 left a number of holes in the city centre, but with the announcement of the 2000 Olympic Games Sydney renewed itself and put on a great show for the world. Sydney was left with a glowing image and a vigorous tourist trade.

Indigenous issues over the last couple of decades have been somewhat more fraught, both in Sydney and further afield. In 1992, a landmark High Court case overturned the principle of *terra nullius* (the idea that Australia was uninhabited when the First Fleet arrived). A later court case provoked the Wik decision, which declared that pastoral leases do not necessarily extinguish native title. In other words, Aborigines may still be able to claim some of their ancestral land. The implications of this ruling are still being resolved.

More recently, pressure piled on the Australian Prime Minister John Howard to apologise for historic, systematic ill treatment of Australia's original inhabitants. This intensified after the publication of the damning *Bringing them Home* report, which graphically detailed the harm done to the 'stolen generation' (see p24). In May 2000, a quarter of a million people (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) marched across Sydney Harbour Bridge in support of National Sorry Day. However, Howard steadfastly refused to budge, arguing that the government should not be obliged to apologise for the actions of previous administrations. Perhaps a change in leader may bring a change in heart, but, at the time of writing, sorry still seems to be the hardest word...

On a state politics level, Sydneysiders are often cynical – surprisingly perhaps, given such a thriving city and a lifestyle that is the envy of many. In July 2005, Labor's Bob Carr, NSW's longest continually serving premier, resigned suddenly after 10 years in office. Carr had overseen one of Sydney's biggest ever infrastructure projects for the Olympic Games, but still faced sharp criticism for congestion, poor public transport and problems with the public health service. These are issues still faced by Morris Iemma, previously NSW's health minister and also of the Labor Party, and Carr's replacement as state premier.

The election of the colourful Clover Moore as Lord Mayor in 2004 perhaps reflected a general frustration with state politics. As an independent pollie (politician), she came with none of the baggage of her rivals from Australia's main political parties. She also embraces many of the issues for which Sydney is famed – such as a sustainable environment and gay rights.

ARTS

While it's not about to match New York City or London for sheer volume of theatres, galleries or performance venues, Sydney nevertheless lays claim to a very healthy and robust arts scene – what else could you expect from a major city with an opera house as its most popular symbol? And as opposed to taking the sniffy, superior attitude so prevalent in many artsy societies, Sydney has a laid-back, open-minded view of its artistic pursuits – perhaps a fortunate consequence of relaxing sand, surf and sea elements being so close by. Also influencing the city's arts scene is a constant pursuit of identity, with its many multicultural facets constantly chiming in. Does this cultural mix work out for the best? You bet it does.

Sydney's blessed environment offers another pleasant bonus for art lovers. Outdoor events are a common theme, especially when the weather turns warm and sultry. Don't be surprised to see sculptures by the sea, hear an author read at an alfresco luncheon, watch cinema in the park under the stars or witness modern dance outside the Opera House on Circular Quay's promenade.

You won't find yourself waiting for cultural events to fall into your lap, either – Sydney's sociable 'get out and be seen' nature keeps gallery openings, theatrical first nights, film screenings and book readings firmly entrenched in many local diaries (see p16 for festivals and events). So whether you're staying just a few days or a few months, be sure to take full advantage of what Sydney's arts scene has to offer – it won't disappoint.

CINEMA & TV

Australia saw some of the world's earliest attempts at cinematography. In 1896, just one year after the Lumiere brothers opened the world's first cinema in Paris, Maurice Sestier (one of the Lumieres' photographers) came to Sydney and made the country's first films. Sestier also opened Australia's first cinema in Sydney during this time – Salon Lumiere on Pitt St – and on 17 October premiered the landmark *Passengers Alighting from Ferry 'Brighton' at Manly*.

One of the most successful of the early Australian feature films was *The Sentimental Bloke* (1919), which premiered in Melbourne but included scenes shot in Manly, the Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens and Woolloomooloo.

The cavalry epic *Forty Thousand Horsemen* (1940), directed by the great filmmaker Charles Chauvel, was a highlight of locally produced and financed films of the 1930s to 1950s (which were often based on Australian history or literature). Chauvel also made the country's first colour movie, the Aboriginal-themed *Jedda* (1955), which was also the first Australian flick to make an appearance at the Cannes film festival. The final scenes were reshot in the Blue Mountains after original footage was lost in a plane crash.

Government intervention in the form of both state and federal subsidies (as well as tax breaks) reshaped the future of the country's film industry from 1969 through the 1970s, with the Australian Film Commission (AFC) being created in 1975. An ongoing 'renaissance' of Australian cinema was thus established, and today Sydney is a major centre for feature-film making.

One director who gained fame during this period and continues to be successful in Hollywood is Sydney-born Peter Weir, who oversaw films like *Gallipoli* (1981), *Dead Poets Society* (1989) and, more recently, *Master and Commander* (2003).

The 1990s saw films that cemented Australia's reputation as a producer of quirky comedies about local misfits: *Strictly Ballroom* (with locations in Pymont and Marrickville), *Muriel's Wedding* (Parramatta, Oxford St, Darling Point and Ryde) and *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Erskineville). Actors who got their cinematic start around this time include Guy Pearce, Hugo Weaving, David Wenham, Russell Crowe, Cate Blanchett, Heath Ledger, Toni Collette and Rachel Griffiths.

Sydney's flashiest film studio, Fox Studios, was once the site of Sydney's much-loved Royal Easter Show. It's now the multimillion-dollar centre of a revitalised and flourishing local industry, and many movies financed with overseas money have been shot and produced here. These include big-budget extravaganzas like the trilogy *The Matrix* (featuring numerous Sydney

top picks

SYDNEY FILMS

- *Finding Nemo* (2003) An excellent animated feature that follows the adventures of a wild clownfish who finds himself captive in a Sydney aquarium. Directed by Andrew Stanton.
- *Lantana* (2001) Touted as a 'mystery for grownups', this is an extraordinary ensemble piece and deeply moving meditation on life, love, truth and grief. Directed by Ray Lawrence.
- *Looking for Alibrandi* (2000) A charming story of what it's like to grow up Italian in modern Sydney. Directed by Kate Woods.
- *The Matrix* (1999-2003) A trio of futuristic mind-bending flicks with plenty of martial-arts action, slick costumes and dark themes. Filmed in Sydney's streets and soundstages. Directed by Andy and Larry Wachowski.
- *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994) A side-splitting comedy starring Hugo Weaving, Terence Stamp and Guy Pearce as Sydney drag queens on a road trip to Alice Springs. Directed by Stephan Elliott.
- *Muriel's Wedding* (1994) Both hilarious and genuinely affecting, following Toni Collette as she makes the transition from Porpoise Spit's Muriel to Darling Point's Mariel. Directed by PJ Hogan.
- *Strictly Ballroom* (1992) A breakthrough Aussie comedy set in the surreal world of competitive ballroom dancing. Directed by Baz Luhrmann.
- *Puberty Blues* (1981) Shows southern Sydney's 1970s surf culture at its most 'perf'. Directed by Bruce Beresford.
- *Two Hands* (1999) A humorous look at Sydney's surprisingly daggy criminal underworld, starring a young Heath Ledger. Directed by Gregor Jordan.
- *The Sum Of Us* (1994) A touching father-son tale in which Russell Crowe jogs around Sydney in his footy shorts as the gay lead. Directed by Geoff Burton and Kevin Dowling Lucas.

skyscrapers), *Mission Impossible 2* (Elizabeth Bay and Sydney Harbour) and the *Star Wars* prequels. Sydneysider Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge* was also made here, and starred Sydney's favourite celebrity and Oscar-winner Nicole Kidman.

Films with Aboriginal themes had mixed success in the past, but have recently gained ground. Sydneysider Phillip Noyce's *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002) broke open Australian cinematic racial barriers to become the year's most successful film. David Gulpili, the most well-known Aboriginal actor, has charmed audiences in *Walkabout* (1971), *The Last Wave* (1977), *Crocodile Dundee* (1986), *Rabbit Proof Fence* and *The Tracker* (2002). For more information on other local film festivals and cinemas, see [p16](#) and [p169](#).

Sydney's three commercial TV stations (channels seven, nine and 10) serve up a steady diet of reality TV dross, soap operas, American comedy imports, sensationalistic news, plenty of sports and enough home/garden makeover shows to make you wonder if Australians ever leave their domiciles to savour all that beautiful weather. One local production that has added to this sunny perception of Oz is *Home and Away*, which is often filmed at Palm Beach on Sydney's Northern Beaches.

ABC (channel two) is the national broadcaster and specialises in BBC-related programs (along with more local news and current affairs) that appeal to a wide sector of Australian society. SBS, the multicultural broadcaster, is the thinking person's TV station and a national gem: its 6.30pm news bulletin is easily the best in the country. For more on TV, see [p228](#).

PAINTING

Traditional European arts didn't quite mesh with the strange and beguiling Australian landscape. The first European landscape painters used colours and features that didn't authentically represent this new land, and today they wouldn't be regarded as typically 'Australian'. This was mainly due to the fact that European aesthetic standards were being applied to a non-European landscape. Some early painters, however, made an effort to approach the Australian landscape on its own terms.

In the early 19th century John Glover (a convict) was an early adopter of the Australian landscape painting style, using warm earth tones and accurate depictions of gum trees and distant mountains in his work. Colonial artists such as Conrad Martens (a friend of Charles Darwin) painted Turner-esque landscapes of Sydney Harbour in the 1850s, startling current Sydneysiders used to seeing a foreshore dominated by exclusive housing rather than miles of bush.

ABORIGINAL ART

Aboriginal art is one of the oldest forms of creativity in the world, dating back more than 50,000 years. It has always been an integral part of Aboriginal life, forming a connection between the past and the present, the supernatural and the earthly, the people and the land. This art is a reflection of Aboriginal people's ancestral Dreaming, or the 'Creation', when the earth's physical features were formed by the struggles between powerful supernatural ancestors. Ceremonies, rituals and sacred paintings are all based on the Dreaming.

Aboriginal art is widely varied and includes dot paintings from the central deserts, bark paintings and weavings from Arnhem Land, woodcarving and silk-screen printing from the Tiwi Islands, and batik printing and woodcarving from central Australia. Warmun artists are known for their ochres, while the Wangkatjungkga community is famous for abstract paintings. Many great young artists are based out of Lockhart River in north Queensland.

Dot and canvas paintings especially have become very popular in the last 25 years, which has given Aboriginal artists both a means with which to preserve their ancient Dreaming values and a way to share this rich cultural heritage with the wider community in Australia. Modern materials like glass, fibre and aluminium have also been incorporated by recent Aboriginal artists, encompassing traditional themes with contemporary expression.

The best way to support Aboriginal artists is to buy their art at a reputable store that guarantees authenticity (and has the papers to prove it) and from Aboriginal-owned galleries and outlets. Some top Aboriginal artists include Mabel Juli, Eubena Nampitjiin, Rosella Namok, Gloria Petyarre, Kathleen Petyarre, Minnie Pwerle, Jimmy Pike, Paddy Japaljarri Stewart, Rover Thomas, Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri and Judy Napangardi Watson. See the Shopping chapter ([p122](#)) for some store recommendations.

CONTEMPORARY ART

The first significant art movement in Australia, the Heidelberg School, emerged around the 1890s. Using impressionistic techniques and favouring outdoor painting, the school represented a major break with prevailing British and Germanic tastes. Painters such as Tom Roberts and Arthur Streeton were the first to render Australian light and colour in this naturalistic fashion. Originally from Melbourne, they came to Sydney and established an artists' camp at Little Sirius Cove in Mosman in 1891, which became a focal point for Sydney artists. Roberts and Streeton depicted what are now considered typically Australian scenes of sheepshearers, pioneers and bushrangers. Their paintings were powerful stimulants to the development of an enduring national mythology.

Frederick McCubbin was also associated with the Heidelberg School and became the first significant white artist born in Australia. His impressionistic work was influenced by his association with Roberts, and his most famous work *Lost* was inspired by a young girl lost in the bush for three weeks.

At the beginning of the 20th century Australian painters began to flirt with modernism, which originally started in Sydney. French-influenced Nora Simpson kick-started the innovative movement, which experimented with cubism and expressionism. Grace Cossington Smith and Margaret Preston were other highly regarded early modernists, both based in Sydney.

In the 1940s there began a flowering of symbolic surrealism in the work of such painters as Sidney Nolan, Arthur Boyd, Albert Tucker and Russell Drysdale. This movement used a spontaneous and transcendent approach to the visual arts, and added another dimension to the Australian creative process through the level of mythology.

In the 1960s Australian art drew on a wide range of cultures and abstract trends. This eclecticism is best represented by the work of Sydney artist Brett Whiteley, who died in 1992 and was an internationally celebrated *enfant terrible* (though it doesn't take much to get called that in these parts). He painted bold, colourful canvases, often with distorted figures, as well as landscapes of Sydney Harbour and Lavender Bay. His studio, containing many of his works, has been preserved as a gallery in Surry Hills (see [p89](#)).

Drawing on popular cultural images for much of his work, Martin Sharp first rose to prominence in the 1960s as cofounder of the satirical magazine *Oz*. In the 1970s he helped restore the 'face' at Luna Park, but is especially famous for his theatrical posters and record covers (including Cream's *Disraeli Gears* and *Wheels Of Fire*).

On the design front, Australia's most successful export has been the work of Marc Newson. His aerodynamic Lockheed Lounge (1985-86) has been snapped up by savvy furniture collectors and design buffs the world over. A graduate of the Sydney College of the Arts, he has long resided overseas.

Performance art can be found at galleries such as Artspace ([p80](#)) in Woolloomooloo – and some of it is certainly not for the faint-hearted. In 2003 Mike Parr performed a piece at Artspace titled *Democratic Torture*, in which people could deliver electric shocks to him via the internet; he's also nailed himself to a wall here in *Malevich: A Political Arm*.

Photographic exhibitions are always on at the Australian Centre for Photography ([p85](#)) in Woollahra. Finally, some of Sydney's quirkiest and most idiosyncratic art can be found in the fashion choices of locals – artist Reg Mombasa's work regularly pops up in the designs of surfwear label Mambo (see [p131](#)).

top picks

GALLERIES

- **Art Gallery of NSW** ([p66](#)) Everything from classic to modern and local to international, plus an exceptional collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander works.
- **Object Gallery** ([p89](#)) Gorgeous crafts and contemporary household designs on display at this new Surry Hills centre.
- **Museum of Contemporary Art** ([p53](#)) Marvellous temporary exhibitions complement the permanent works at this large modern art museum. Great café also.
- **Australian Centre for Photography** ([p85](#)) Offers a constant roster of interesting photographic exhibitions.
- **Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation** ([p86](#)) Temporary exhibitions of contemporary Australian, Asian and Pacific work.

SYDNEY SCULPTURE WALK

One thing that makes Sydney such a pleasant city to stroll around is the Sydney Sculpture Walk, an excellent collection of 10 intriguing artworks created by local and overseas artists. They're dotted around central Sydney, mostly in its parks and gardens.

In the Royal Botanic Gardens you'll stumble upon Bronwyn Oliver's sculptures, *Magnolia* and *Palm*, which depict oversized seedlike matter. Nearby in Farm Cove, Brenda Croft pays tribute to the area's indigenous clans with *Wuganmaqulya*. Look down for this – it's a mix of coloured concrete and tile work in the footpath. More traditional is Fiona Hall's *Folly for Mrs Macquarie*, a beautifully symbolic birdcagelike gazebo. It's on Lawn 62 of the Botanic Gardens.

In The Domain is Debra Phillips' *Viva Voce* at Speaker's Corner, a fitting tribute to the soapboxers. Nearby is the large-scale *Veil of Trees* by Janet Laurence and Jisuk Han, which features clear glass, opaque steel and 100 eucalyptus trees native to the area. Also in The Domain is a sandstone spiral entitled *Memory is Creation Without End*, by Kimio Tsuchiya, which uses its surrounding space beautifully.

The Archaeology of Bathing by Robyn Backen evokes the elements of the former Woolloomooloo baths of the 1830s. The site was used for bathing by the indigenous Cadigal people. Close by is Nigel Helyer's *Dual Nature*, which includes water- and land-based elements, some of which feature the effective use of soundscapes.

Lynne Robert-Goodwin's *Tank Stream – Into the Head of the Cove* does stream-spotters a great favour by placing five illuminated markers at street level to highlight the route of the Tank Stream, which runs under central Sydney. Last but not least, *Passage* by Anne Graham marks out the borders and some of the features of two Georgian-era houses that once stood in what we now call Martin Place.

Other modern artists of note include Sandy Bruch, Ian Fairweather, Keith Looby, Ian Grant, Judy Cassab, Lindy Lee and John Olsen.

SCULPTURE

Sydney's first sculptors of public art were the members of the indigenous Eora nation. Figures of animals and humans were engraved into the area's rock outcroppings, offering a tiny insight into the Dreamtime, social systems and occupational patterns. Although Sydney claims more engraving sites than any other city in Australia, many have been covered by modern construction. You can still see some engravings in Bondi (p95), Sydney Harbour National Park (p106) and Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park (p112). For more on Aboriginal art, see p28.

Sydney is no slouch when it comes to exhibiting sculpture in its public spaces. Exceptional pieces to keep an eye out for include *Edge of Trees* (Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley) in front of the Museum of Sydney; *Touchstones* (Kan Yasuda) in the Aurora Place plaza at Phillip and Bent Sts; *Three Wheeler* (Tim Prentice) in the reception of Aurora Place; and *Canoe* (Richard Goodwin) at 30 Hickson Rd. Clusters of interesting pieces can also be seen in the Royal Botanic Gardens, The Domain and Martin Place. For a self-guided sculpture walk in these areas, see above. Sydney Architecture Walks (p35) offers guided tours of public art and its place within Sydney's landscape.

Some of Sydney's buildings have incorporated sculptural pieces, such as the Art Gallery of NSW (p66), whose façade features four bronze relief panels by different sculptors. The Opera House shows obvious sculptural influences in its design.

The world's largest outdoor sculpture exhibition is *Sculpture by the Sea* (p18), which takes place in November on the stunningly gorgeous seaside walk between Bondi and Tamarama beaches. Don't miss it if you're in the area during this time.

MUSIC

Sydney offers the traveller everything from world-class opera and intimate jazz to urban indigenous hip-hop and live electronic beats. Rock gigs take place every night of the week in the city's pubs and theatres, and the city attracts plenty of big-name touring artists.

Rock, Pop & Dance

Australia loves its pop stars and is currently churning them out at a rate of knots in reality TV shows. It's enough to make you feel a little sad for the current crop of perky *Neighbours* and *Home & Away* stars who are missing out on the opportunity to be the next Kylie. Pop acts that

have proven to be more than a flash in the pan include Delta Goodrem, Natalie Imbruglia, Paulini and Human Nature (a Sydney-based boy band who have been having hits for over 10 years). The best purveyor of credible local pop is Sydney producer paulmac, whose melodic tunes have crossed over from underground dance clubs to commercial radio.

For the best part of the last decade, dance music has ruled supreme in the local bar and club scene. You'll find a bit of everything being played around town, from drum'n'bass to electro. Big-name DJs include Kid Kenobi, Ajax, Sveta and the brilliant Stephen Allkins, who has released two excellent albums under the moniker [Love] Tattoo.

Following the international trend, guitar music is starting to have a renaissance. In the '70s and '80s, Australia turned out a swag of pub rockers; INXS, Midnight Oil and Men at Work hit the charts worldwide. The most obvious heirs to this tradition are Melbourne's Jet. Sydneysiders to listen out for include indie kids The Cops, rowdy punks Frenzal Rhomb, grungy rockers The Vines, folksy singer-songwriter Alex Lloyd, and the jangly guitar of The Whitlams and Eskimo Joe. Local grunge gods Silverchair launched their album *Young Modern* in Sydney in 2007 to much acclaim.

Not fitting neatly into any category is the amazingly talented Paul Copsis, whose husky, soulful vocals need to be heard to be believed. He can channel anyone from Janis Joplin to Billy Holiday at will.

For details on where to catch live music and DJs, see the Drinking & Nightlife chapter (p154).

Indigenous

Songs are an incredibly important part of traditional Aboriginal culture. Aboriginal mythology tells of the Dreamtime or Dreaming, the time when totemic spirits created the world with song. These spirits left emblems behind, and connecting them are songlines or invisible pathways that tell the story of this creation. For Aborigines these integral songs also function as totems, maps and a guiding system of land tenure.

Most recently traditional Aboriginal music has been hybridised with modern sounds to create a musical fusion that blends didgeridoo notes with dance beats, reggae, rock, blues, country and pop. Contemporary indigenous artists include Yothu Yindi, who combine traditional Aboriginal sounds with a dance beat, and Torres Strait Island pop singer Christine Anu. Hip-hop has proven enormously popular with indigenous and Islander youth, spawning vital acts such as MC Wire who hails from the NSW north coast.

Folk

The early European settlers' ballads and songs about the bush comprise a uniquely Australian folklore, and mark the first attempt to adapt European cultural forms to the Australian environment. These creative efforts evolved from convict ditties, campfire yarns, and English, Scottish and Irish folk songs. Part poetry and part music-hall romp, they paint an evocative picture of life in the bush in the

top picks

A SYDNEY PLAYLIST

- **Darlinghurst Nights** (The Go-Betweens, 2005) Sad Darlinghurst memories get an airing.
- **Sydney Song** (Eskimo Joe, 2001) Ode to Sydney wannabes.
- **Never Had So Much Fun** (Frenzal Rhomb, 1999) Local punks advise against drinking the water.
- **You Gotta Love this City** (The Whitlams, 1999) Or any other song from this album – 'God drinks at the Sando', 'Blow up the Pokies' etc.
- **Purple Sneakers** (You Am I, 1995) 'Had a scratch only you could itch, underneath the Glebe Point Bridge'.
- **My Drug Buddy** (The Lemonheads, 1992) Evan Dando gets wasted on Newtown's King St.
- **Darling It Hurts** (Paul Kelly, 1986) Ode to a Darlinghurst street worker.
- **Reckless** (Australian Crawl, 1983) Glacial '80s pop to listen to 'as the Manly ferry cuts its way to Circular Quay'.
- **Power & the Passion** (Midnight Oil, 1982) Peter Garrett, now a federal MP, vents about Sydney 'wasting away in paradise' and a great line about 'underarms and football clubs'.
- **Bliss** (Th' Dudes, 1979) Kiwi rockers score speed in Coogee and falafels in Kings Cross.
- **Section 5 (Bus to Bondi)** (Midnight Oil, 1979) Garrett proves his green credentials taking public transport.
- **Khe Sahn** (Cold Chisel, 1978) Classic Aussie rock about a Vietnam vet's return.

19th century. You can sometimes hear these old songs at venues in The Rocks area. *Waltzing Matilda* is the most famous example.

Classical

Classical music can be heard at the Sydney Opera House, at nearby universities and at various city venues like the exceptional City Recital Hall. Opera Australia, Australia's national opera company, keeps itself busy giving around 250 performances per year. It's based at the Sydney Opera House for seven months of the year (and in Melbourne the rest of the time). Some notable Australian opera singers you may be able to catch performing include Amelia Farrugia, Cheryl Barker, David Hobson and Joan Carden.

See [p168](#) for more detailed listings of various companies and venues.

THEATRE

Sydney provides something for all mainstream tastes, from imported blockbuster musicals at major venues like the State Theatre to solid, crowd-friendly productions in well-built theatres in the city. While there are a few small theatre companies staging more experimental, exciting works in inner-city suburbs, Sydney's theatrical tastes tend towards, well, the unadventurous end of the spectrum, and sometimes appear to be riding the wave from its 1970s glory days.

While the bulk of Australian actors live and work in Sydney, Australia's geographic isolation and a lingering sense of the 'cultural cringe' mean that truly local theatre gigs are few and far between, and not particularly well paid. Thus, many actors prefer to get as much film and TV work as they can, or better yet, go overseas. The National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) in Kensington is a breeding ground for new talent, and stages performances of students' work. For more details on theatre venues, see [p172](#).

The city's biggest name in theatre is the popular Sydney Theatre Company (STC), at Miller's Point. Established in 1978, it provides a balanced program of modern, classical, local and foreign drama and attracts solid talent across the board. The company is still radiant from the opening of its state-of-the-art Sydney Theatre in 2004. However that achievement has lately been overshadowed by the announcement that it's scored Cate Blanchett along with her husband, playwright Andrew Upton, as its new artistic directors.

There are also many smaller theatre companies presenting genuinely innovative work: Sydney's much-loved Company B at the Belvoir St Theatre; Griffin at the Stables; Tamarama Rock Surfers at the Old Fitzroy, and various local independent companies at the Darlinghurst Theatre. The independent scene also supports 'boutique' companies like Pact Youth Theatre and the Sidetrack Performance group, which emphasise multicultural issues.

In 2006, Griffin's staging of Australian author Timothy Conigrave's memoir *Holding The Man*, adapted by Tommy Murphy, took Sydney by storm – returning in 2007 for another sell-out season before touring the country. It won the NSW Premier's Award for a new theatre work and is in the process of being staged by international theatre companies.

Sydney-based writers and directors of note include the acclaimed John Bell, who often takes the reins (when he's not appearing on stage) of his Bell Shakespeare Company; Neil Armfield, the prolific artistic director of Company B; Kate Gaul, who is known for interpreting new works; Adam Cook, who took on the challenging task of adapting and directing Patrick White's *The Aunt's Story* for the stage in 2001; and the political Stephen Sewell, who wrote the multi-award-winning play *Myth, Propaganda and Disaster in Nazi Germany and Contemporary America*.

Stage performers to keep an eye out for in local productions include Deborah Mailman, Jackie Weaver, Marcus Graham, John Howard (not that one), Robyn Nevin and Barry Otto.

Sydney is still recovering from the deaths of two of its brightest theatre stars in recent years: former STC founder Richard Wherrett (1940–2001), who might have been Australia's most successful and controversial theatrical director; and the much-loved playwright and teacher Nick Enright (1950–2003), whose legacy includes the musical *The Boy from Oz* and the Oscar-nominated screenplay *Lorenzo's Oil*. Both men contributed to the flourishing of the Sydney theatrical scene from the 1970s onwards.

LITERATURE & NONFICTION

Australia's literary history could be said to have started with the convict colony in Sydney in the late 18th century. New adventures and landscapes inspired the colonists to tell stories and eventually to record them with the written word. By the mid-19th century the Australian storytelling tradition was becoming established, and though many early works have been lost, some – like Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of his Natural Life* (1870) – managed to survive.

In the late 19th century a more formal Australian literary movement began to develop with *The Bulletin*, an influential publication that promoted an egalitarian and unionist school of thought (and survives to this day). Well-known contributing authors of the time included Henry Lawson (1867–1922), who wrote short stories about the Australian bush, and AB 'Banjo' Paterson (1864–1941), famous for his poems – especially *Waltzing Matilda* and *The Man from Snowy River*.

Miles Franklin (1879–1954) wrote *My Brilliant Career* (1901), considered the first authentic Australian novel. After coming out it caused a sensation, especially when it was revealed that Miles was a woman. Another gender bender was Ethel Florence Lindesay Richardson, who worked under the pseudonym of Henry Handel Richardson and is now regarded as one of Australia's most important early-20th-century writers.

Multi-award-winning Australian writers of international stature include Patrick White (the only Australian ever to have won the Nobel Prize in Literature, in 1973), Thomas Keneally (Booker Prize–winner 1982) and Peter Carey (Booker Prize–winner 1988 and 2001), as well as Commonwealth Writers Award–winners David Malouf, Murray Bail, Alex Miller, Tim Winton, Richard Flanagan and Kate Grenville. Other reliable reads include Neil Drinnan, Graeme Aitken, Peter Robb, Kate Jennings, Robert Dessaix and John Birmingham. For poetry look out for the

SYDNEY IN PRINT

- *The Secret River*, Kate Grenville (2005) The book that won Grenville the Commonwealth Prize and a Booker nomination, it's a powerful story of convict life set in the early 19th century in Sydney and the Hawkesbury River.
- *Sydney Architecture*, Paul McGillick and Patrick Bingham-Hall (2005) One for the coffee table, beautiful photographs and interesting text showcase over 100 of Sydney's most stunning buildings.
- *The Girl From Botany Bay*, Carolly Erickson (2004) A history in the style of a novel, telling the fascinating story of Mary Bryant, a First Fleet convict who escaped in a small boat, making it all the way to Indonesia before being recaptured.
- *30 Days in Sydney*, Peter Carey (2001) A rich and nostalgic account of Peter Carey's return to Sydney after 10 years of living in New York City. His emotions and experiences read like a diary, with full descriptions and a theme covering the four elements of earth, air, fire and water. A skilled observer and historian.
- *Quill*, Neal Drinnan (2001) A sassy and moving tale of gay love, life and death in Sydney, with party scenes that many Sydneysiders will relate to.
- *In the Gutter... Looking At the Stars* ed Mandy Sayer and Louis Nowra (2000) Absolutely spellbinding, this compilation of writings about Kings Cross paints a vivid portrait of the area's rich and varied history, decade by decade.
- *Leviathan*, John Birmingham (1999) A gritty history written in the tone of an unauthorised biography exploring Sydney's seamier side. You won't want to put it down.
- *Vanity Fierce*, Graeme Aitken (1998) Taking on the seeming shallowness of Darlinghurst gay life, this witty novel makes many a wry observation and wise crack.
- *The Cross*, Mandy Sayer (1995) Based on the life and disappearance of Juanita Nelson – an unsolved mystery still – this novel has Kings Cross as a central character and is an illuminating treatment of a nasty period in Sydney's history (the 1970s), when organised crime and property development led to murder.
- *The Playmaker*, Thomas Keneally (1987) The inverse of Carolly Erickson's book, this is a novel in the style of a history, with Mary Bryant making another appearance – this time as an actor in the first play ever staged in the new continent. It's hard-going at first, but worth the effort.
- *Voss*, Patrick White (1957) Nobel Prize–winner White contrasts the harsh and unforgiving outback with colonial life in Sydney in this modern masterpiece. It tells the story of German obsessive explorer Voss, who plans to cross Australia from coast to coast. In the 1980s *Voss* was transformed into an opera, with a libretto by David Malouf.
- *The Harp In The South*, Ruth Park (1948) A gripping and touching account of an impoverished family's life in Surry Hills when the suburb was a crowded slum.

ARTISTIC AWARDS

The New South Wales (NSW) Premier's Awards is an annual prize-giving bonanza that rewards the best local literary works in a variety of genres, including children's, young adults', fiction, translation, theatre and poetry, with \$15,000 going to each winner. Winners are announced in May at Parliament House, as part of the Sydney Writers' Festival (p17). Learn more at www.arts.nsw.gov.au.

The Archibald Prize is a high-profile annual competition that attracts Australian artists not so much for the prizes (from \$10,000 to \$35,000), but for the exposure they gain. Prizes are given in different genres, which include portrait, landscape, mural/subject and photography. Winners are announced in April. The Archibald never fails to stimulate debates and controversies; for more information see www.thearchibaldprize.com.au.

works of Samuel Wagan Watson, Jaya Savige, John Tranter, Dorothy Porter and Jill Jones, among others.

One worthy literary journal that regularly showcases excellent Australian writing talent is *Heat*, which is edited by Sydney-raised Ivor Indyk and features poetry, fiction and nonfiction. It's available at many bookshops around Sydney and is published regularly by Giramondo.

See p17 for details on the annual Sydney Writers' Festival.

ARCHITECTURE LANDSCAPE & HISTORY

Ever since Captain Arthur Phillip supped from the Tank Stream, water has shaped modern Sydney's settlement and development. The Tank Stream now runs in brick culverts beneath the city streets, but in the early days following the arrival of the First Fleet it defined the city. Phillip used the stream to separate convicts on the rocky west from the officers on the gentler eastern slopes. In effect, he used the landscape to hem convicts in by the sea on one side and soldiers on another. Following this pattern, government institutions were concentrated to the east of the stream, while industry set up shop on the western side of the city. In this way, social differences were articulated in the layout of the settlement and set a pattern that continued as the city grew. This class distinction had a lasting effect, which can still be seen in Sydney 220 years later.

According to scientist and author Dr Tim Flannery, many Aboriginal campsites used to lie near fresh water on the north-facing shore – and the settlers took their cue from the original inhabitants. Topographically, it makes sense. The area catches the winter sun, and is relatively sheltered from the chilling southerly and the bullying westerly winds. The northeasterly breeze, meanwhile, comes straight through the mouth of the harbour, delivering warm winter and cool summer breezes.

In one of history's great coincidences, Frenchman Jean Comte de la Pérouse arrived at Botany Bay days after the First Fleet. That event and fierce competition from other colonial powers meant there was a perceived threat of invasion from the outset. As a consequence, the navy appropriated much of the harbour foreshore. This was a fortunate twist of events – much of the land was not built upon, in effect conserving these regions as wildernesses while the rest of Sydney sprang up around them. Six key harbour sites, including the North Head and Cockatoo Island, have now been returned to the people of Sydney under the control of the Harbour Trust. See www.harbourtrust.gov.au for more information.

AN ANTIPODEAN BRITAIN

The men and women that arrived in the First Fleet were staggeringly ill prepared for the realities of building in their new, raw environment. British powers-that-be had not thought to include any architect on board. Design and construction duties largely fell to the one bricklayer among the new arrivals, James Bloodsworth. A convict transportee, he found himself in such a key role more by chance than by design. Inevitably, the early builders looked to the 'mother' country for inspiration, but shoddy workmanship, poor tools and a temporary feel to the colony conspired against long-term success.

Perhaps the most significant change to this ad-hoc, unplanned approach was the arrival of new governor Lachlan Macquarie in 1810. Both he and his wife viewed good architecture as an

essential component of a thriving, healthy society. The arrival of several architects, including the immensely important Francis Greenway, a convict transported for forgery, helped transform Sydney's city landscape. The prevailing Georgian architecture of Britain was echoed in many of the buildings that sprang up at this time – adapted to local materials and skills.

As the 19th century progressed, the colony's architects still looked to Britain for inspiration, but broader European influences were seen, from the neoclassical [Sydney Town Hall](#) (see p68) to the early-Gothic-style spires of [St Mary's Cathedral](#) (see p67).

Australia became a fully fledged country in its own right at the beginning of the 20th century – and an increasing architectural autonomy reflected this new independence. Architects questioned the more traditional approaches and sought different ways to adapt buildings to Sydney's extraordinary landscape and location – particularly in the residential areas. In the city centre, meanwhile, the scrapping of height restrictions in the 1950s sparked Sydney's love-in with the skyscraper. Modernism was an influential movement with architects such as Harry Seidler looking to make best use of Sydney's sunny climate and harbour views – and embracing a much more diverse international attitude. Of course, the legacy of early British influence is still clear from a walk around central Sydney. Today's buildings, however, are much more sensitive to the environment rather than being influenced from afar.

UTILITARIAN

From the arrival of the first white settlers, Sydney has relied on its harbour. All sorts of cargo (including human) has been unloaded on its shores, feeding and sustaining the city. Some of the most interesting central buildings are the utilitarian wharves and warehouse structures that still line parts of the western shore. Many sprouted up after the arrival of the bubonic plague at the wharves in 1900 (which killed 103 Sydneysiders in eight months). This was used as the excuse by the government to resume control of the old, privately owned wharves and clean up The Rocks slums. The new industrial buildings reflected a turn to utilitarian simplicity, in contrast to the previous obsession with neoclassical forms. The 'containerisation' of shipping in the 1960s and 1970s made many of these sites redundant almost overnight.

Now, Sydneysiders' obsession for harbourside living is also putting many of these historic sites at risk. However, some have been transformed through some inspired redevelopment, with once dilapidated sheds becoming top-notch cafés, restaurants and apartments. The Woolloomooloo (p80) and Walsh Bay finger wharves (p56) are the most dramatic examples of the new uses for these old structures. One of the city's big architectural challenges is to retain the richness of a working harbour and adapt these industrial sites to a successful, working role of the city today.

MODERN

Between the two world wars, Australia looked to the US for architectural inspiration and a building boom took place. Martin Place (Map pp62–3), with its granite-bedecked Art Deco temples to commerce and big business, is a well-preserved example. Similarly lavish buildings began to dot the eastern suburban skyline, giving a stylish look to many suburbs, despite some hideous modern incursions.

The opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932 was also a seminal moment for the city's architecture, opening up the densely forested north shore to development. Much of this shoreline retains its rural character to this day, reflecting the architects' determination to engage with Sydney's rugged natural charms. Some good news in the 1950s and

THE INSIDE STORY OF SYDNEY'S ARCHITECTURE

For a fresh, enthusiastic and expert insight into the building of Sydney, there's no better way than to take a stroll with an architect. The passionate building buffs at [Sydney Architecture Walks](#) (☎ 8239 2211; www.sydneyarchitecture.org; tours adult/child \$25/20; 🕒 10:30am Wed, Sat & Sun) will open your eyes to Sydney's architecture, old and new. Those who are into the Sydney Opera House will love the Utzon walk. Other routes take in contemporary Sydney (with particular focus on Aurora Place), the harbour edge (with special emphasis on the Walsh Bay Finger Wharves) and consider architecture's relationship to the city's landscape. Strolls last two hours, and leave rain or shine from the Museum of Sydney (p66).

1960s came via the 'Sydney School', which pioneered a distinctively Australian architecture, characterised by the appreciation of native landscapes and natural materials and the avoidance of conventional and historic language. Further steps were taken as 'new Australians' like Harry Seidler and Hugh Buhrich brought to the local architectural scene a sensitivity to place, infused with Bauhaus and modernist-inspired concepts.

Since the early 1960s, central Sydney has become a mini-Manhattan of tall buildings vying for harbour views, thanks to the lifting in the late 1950s of the 150ft (46m) height limit. Best early modernist examples are Harry Seidler's Australia Square (p61) and MLC buildings. Plans for an almost total redevelopment of the city's historic districts were afoot in the 1960s as the irascible Askin Liberal Government (who kicked Sydney Opera House designer Jørn Utzon out of Sydney) deemed many Victorian and early-20th-century buildings undesirable in the race to construct an 'all new' metropolis. Thankfully, the 'green bans' campaign and plenty of vociferous local protests managed to save large chunks of The Rocks and areas such as Kings Cross, Paddington and Woolloomooloo.

Many buildings from the 1970s and 1980s are forgettable, but there are striking exceptions such as the Capita Centre on Castlereagh St and Governors Phillip and Macquarie Towers (p66) on Phillip St.

CONTEMPORARY

The spate of skyscraper-building that hit central Sydney following the lifting of height restrictions has defined the skyline. For a while, the city's older buildings were in danger of being neglected. That changed for the bicentennial celebrations of 1988 when cultural heritage soared up the agenda. As well as the refurbishment of Macquarie St and Circular Quay, developers turned their eye towards Darling Harbour. Although some critics accuse the end result of tackiness, few can question how completely the mostly disused industrial area was transformed.

The enthusiasm for retaining Sydney's historic character continues unabated. Many old buildings were earmarked for a new use, and some were done to surprising effect. Historic buildings like The Mint (p64) and the Sydney Conservatorium of Music (p59) on Macquarie St, the Customs House (p58) at Circular Quay and the Walsh Bay Finger Wharves (p56) are great examples of how thoughtful and sympathetic contemporary work can inject new life and energy into an area.

The other defining event that placed Sydney's architecture firmly on the international radar was, of course, the 2000 Olympic Games. Many of the buildings and infrastructure

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

Frank Lloyd Wright called it a 'circus tent' and Mies van der Rohe thought it the work of the devil, yet Danish architect Jørn Utzon bequeathed Sydney one of the 20th century's defining architectural moments.

Utzon was 38 when he entered the Opera House competition and, remarkably, had only realised a few small houses. Working from navigational maps of the site and memories of his travels to the great pre-Columbian platforms in Mexico, Utzon achieved the unimaginable. His great architectural gesture – billowing white clouds hovering above a heavy stone platform – tapped into the essence of Sydney, almost as if building and site had grown out of the same founding principles.

Eight years on, having realised his designs for the platform, concrete shells and ceramic skin, Utzon found himself with a new client, NSW Premier and Liberal Party scoundrel Robert Askin. By April 1966, owed hundreds of thousands of dollars in unpaid fees, Utzon was unceremoniously forced to leave his building half-finished. He says now that the six years he spent developing his House's interiors and glass walls, of which there is nothing to show, were the most productive of his working life.

Now in his nineties, Utzon is again working on his Opera House, this time through his architect son Jan Utzon and Sydney architect Richard Johnson. Attempts at reconciliation began in the 1990s, and Utzon agreed to be taken as a consultant. The majority of the new work concerns the interiors, most notably the design of a completely new acoustic interior for the Opera Shell. Utzon senior, however, has never returned to the country where his most famous work stands – and it is now unlikely he ever will.

developed around Homebush Bay, where the Games were largely held, were simply world class. Meanwhile, some of the most innovative contemporary work in Sydney often happens far from the public gaze in the realm of the single-family house. Here, enlightened clients can bankroll the creative ambition of their architects. Leading figures include Richard Leplastrier, Glenn Murcutt, Peter Stutchbury, Neil Durbach, Camilla Block and Richard Francis-Jones.

WHAT TO SEE

Modern Sydney began life in Sydney Cove – and the area immediately around it has been the hub of the city ever since. It's no surprise that central Sydney gives the best insight into how the city's architecture has matured from shaky, poorly crafted imitation to confident autonomy. For a self-guided journey around some of Sydney's key city centre buildings, see p69.

If the CBD is ideal for tracing the development of institutional and financial building styles, The Rocks is the place to head for the social background behind Sydney's architecture. See The Rocks walking tour (p59) for some of the essential sights. Millers Point (Map p54) also reveals some impressive social housing policies and the area's strong industrial maritime heritage.

For the best glimpse of inner-city Sydney residential development, make your way to Potts Point and Elizabeth Bay (Map p78). The backstreets of this dense suburb include superb Art Deco apartments, modern housing, coffee shops, boutique eateries and surprising harbour glimpses.

Outside of the city centre, places of architectural note are more sporadically located. Castlecrag Estate (Map pp50–1) is the classic example of considered North Shore development. Walter Burley Griffin and his wife built the estate from local sandstone in the 1930s, shaping the architecture in response to the dramatic, leafy topography of the area.

GREEN BUILDINGS

Environmental concerns have rocketed up the agenda in Sydney over the past decade – and that applies to its architecture, too. The Olympic Games didn't quite get the ball rolling, but they certainly quickened the momentum. There are several developments around Olympic Park that highlight the 'sustainable' agenda of the Games. In fact, one is probably the first thing you will see when you arrive in the area, the Olympic Park Rail Station, which is admired for its natural light and ventilation and striking, shell-like design. The modernist blocks of Newington Apartments (Bruce Eeles), originally the Olympic Village, also emphasise natural light as well as energy conservation and water recycling. While you are there, try to catch the sleek grace of Peter Stutchbury's Archery Pavilion.

Since the Olympics, 30 The Bond (Map p54) on Hickson Rd has become the benchmark for Sydney's green buildings. Its adjustable façade, chilled beam air-conditioning and large amounts of natural light make it the most energy efficient building in Sydney. Its developers were the first to pledge to achieving a five-star Australian Building Greenhouse rating.

Of course, sustainable building is not limited to big financial and infrastructure developments – 'green' residential projects are also coming on apace. It's not just new buildings either. Concerns about the environment have even led one resident to convert a 19th-century terraced house into the city's first sustainable home (p38).

ECONOMY

Sydney is Australia's chief commercial, financial and industrial centre and is responsible for about a quarter of Australia's economic activity. It's the headquarters of the nation's biggest businesses and banks. The Sydney economy is comparable to that of Singapore and larger than the whole of New Zealand. The city's economic growth is consistently above the national average and unemployment rates lower.

The Australian economy has been strong in recent years, but in 2007 things were heating up even more, driven by high export prices for commodities. Business and consumer confidence

are running high, economic growth is strong (4% predicted) and unemployment is at a 32-year low. All of this has added to inflationary pressure, which is likely to result in interest rate hikes – bad news for mortgage holders and, if the strong dollar increases even further as a result, bad news for exporters and international tourists.

Sydney's two harbours and busy airport make it an important transport hub; most of Australia's foreign trade is conducted in Sydney and NSW. Its industry includes shipyards, oil refineries, textile mills, foundries, electronics and chemical plants. It's true that Sydney is obsessed by property. Property and business services employ the most people (14.8%), followed by the retail trade (13.9%) and manufacturing (12.6%), which was the biggest employer 10 years ago.

Housing prices remain high; Sydney has the 8th most expensive property by sq metre of any city in the world. While owning your own house is increasingly unaffordable, a rental shortage is contributing to a higher cost of living for the lower paid.

A 2007 international study rated Sydney as having the 9th best quality of living of any city in the world. This should be cause for celebration, but most Sydneysiders already believe their city is number one. Any joy in beating Melbourne (in 12th spot) is diminished by being ranked four spots lower than Auckland.

More joy can be taken from being ranked the 14th biggest hub of the new worldwide economy in a 2007 report commissioned by MasterCard Worldwide – confirming Sydney's place as the economic powerhouse of Australasia (Auckland didn't even make the list) and the fifth most important commercial centre in the Asia-Pacific region.

SYDNEY'S SUSTAINABLE HOUSE

It seems like an everyday 19th-century terrace house from the outside, one of hundreds in the inner-city suburb of Chippendale. In many ways it is. But there are signs that this is not quite as run of the mill as it first appears. The doorbell for example – you'll hear no electronic chime here. You simply pull on a string leading through the brick front to a bell on the other side. Welcome, then, to Sydney's original sustainable house.

Its owner, Michael Mobb, was getting his hands dirty for a more sustainable lifestyle way before it became the in-vogue media topic. Back in 1996, he and his wife were planning a kitchen and bathroom renovation. But that work turned into something a whole lot more ambitious and life-changing: they decided to switch their house into a fully sustainable home, with all their energy and water needs supplied on site.

'People thought I was really weird,' Michael remembers. 'Back then, people thought it was a nice idea but a bit bohemian. Now it's become mainstream – everyone likes to say they've got a solar panel on their roof.'

Like the string doorbell, many of the innovations in the house are disarmingly simple. All the fittings – from the rainwater filter on the drainpipe to the stainless-steel benches that magnify the sunlight and stop the need for electric light during the day – are available from normal tradespeople. And Michael is at pains to stress how ordinary the home is: 'If my kids have got friends over, there's no need to train them how to use the water or energy system – it's very straightforward'.

But the simplicity has not stopped the overhaul from having a huge effect. The average Sydneysider uses 274L of water a day. By using rainwater and recycling waste water efficiently, Michael's household of four uses just 220L a day – combined. The same dramatic decrease occurred with energy consumption. The house used to burn 24 kilowatts of electricity; now it uses just six. Indeed, by using the power generated by rooftop solar panels, the house exports more energy to the national grid than it uses. And when we walk into the house, Michael proudly shows off a new arrival that he hopes will cut his current power use even further – a large, super energy-efficient fridge. 'The one before was my biggest mistake,' he says. 'If I had put a grate under the fridge, the cool air could have increased efficiency by up to 25%'.

In fact, these mistakes are part of the reason he likes to share his experience. 'It shows people they can make a difference just by the way they put their fridge in the kitchen – if I put the information out there, people might develop better, simpler ideas, so it could become more affordable'.

So why set out to convert something as tricky as a 19th-century terraced house? 'The first act of defeat would have been to go and do this in an untouched bush setting – it would have been like running away', Michael says. 'Here, the message is much clearer, the fact that I did it 10 minutes from the centre of the city'.

More information on Sydney's sustainable house is available at www.sustainablehouse.com.au.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Athens and Sparta, Paris and Milan, Springfield and Shelbyville – their struggles pale beside the epic 150-year rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne. Australia's biggest city, Sydney is also its oldest, having begun in 1788 as a convict colony. Melbourne, currently in the number-two slot, was founded in 1835. Sixteen years later prospectors struck gold in Victoria, and the ensuing rush rocketed Melbourne ahead of Sydney in both wealth and population. The Sydney-Melbourne Rivalry (SMR) had begun.

Competition flared when Melbourne became Australia's temporary capital following nationhood in 1901. Purpose-built Canberra didn't replace Melbourne until 1927, by which time a driven Sydney had begun catching up financially, having already retaken the lead in human numbers.

These days, the SMR plays out for the most part as friendly chaffing, though discussions can get heated. Melburnians will point to Sydney's convict origins, its high housing prices and what they see as a lack of culture, while talking up their own city's multi-ethnicity, great pubs and lively arts scene. Sydneysiders will often either feign ignorance of any rivalry, or maintain that it's one-sided, an invention of envious Melburnians deluded enough to compare their boring burgh with the obviously superior Sydney.

If you should get caught in the middle between such types, don't pour oil on the waters by saying the two cities are nearing parity in their cultural diversity and culinary sophistication. Just put on your most innocent face and ask, 'Hey, does Canberra really suck as much as they say?'

ENVIRONMENT & PLANNING

THE LAND

Sydney lies on Australia's populous east coast, about 870km north of Melbourne by road and almost 1000km south of Brisbane. Standing on the cliffs near Bondi you get a sense of the vast sandstone shelf that forms this edge of the continent, sliced off by the waves below and carved like cheese by ancient waterways into harbours and inlets.

The city is centred on the harbour of Port Jackson, but Greater Sydney sprawls over 1800 sq km and has grown to encompass Botany Bay in the south, the foothills of the Blue Mountains in the west and the fringes of the national parks to the north.

FAUNA

Sydney's bird life is plentiful, spectacular and makes one hell of a din. The biggest show-offs are the sulphur-crested cockatoos, with their raucous squawks, sumptuous white plumage and yellow crowns. You'll also spot rainbow lorikeets, kookaburras, galahs, Australian white ibises (usually with their heads in the bins in Hyde Park), pelicans (by the fish market) and, if you're very lucky, lyrebirds (in Ku-Ring-Gai Chase National Park).

Possums are common and there's a large colony of grey-haired flying foxes at the Royal Botanic Gardens (p57), but you'll need to head to the national parks to spot wallabies and other native mammals. There's a small population of koalas at Avalon on the Northern Beaches.

Water dragons and blue-tongued lizards can sometimes be seen. Sydney is home to one of the deadliest snakes in the world, the eastern brown snake, although you'll rarely find it in urban areas. Other slithery locals include the common death adder, the diamond python and the red-bellied black snake.

On the other hand, spiders are quite likely to make an appearance. The large brown huntsman spiders (15cm) are scary looking but big softies. The ones to watch out for are the venomous redbacks and funnel-webs. You'll spot plenty of St Andrews Cross spiders in their elaborate webs all over Sydney.

GREEN SYDNEY

Sydney's residents are a reasonably environmentally sensitive bunch; when you start with such a glorious setting, you have a lot of incentive to keep things nice. Many households and businesses recycle paper, glass and plastic. Parks and bushland in and around Sydney act as animal and plant habitats, recreation reserves and the city's 'lungs'.

Sydney's glorious beaches are fairly clean but can become polluted after heavy rainfalls, when city runoff and sewage overflow streams into the city's harbour and coastal waters. Millions have been spent installing litter and pollution traps, but it's still best not to swim at harbour beaches for three days after heavy rain and avoid the ocean for a day. You can drink tap water without fear, however.

There is controversy around plans to build a desalination plant to overcome Sydney's falling dam levels during the ongoing drought. A desalination plant is an extremely energy-intensive way to provide drinking water, and the energy required is most likely to be provided by burning fossil fuels – adding to the already high greenhouse emissions.

Sydney's love affair with the car and the city's high humidity mean that air pollution can sometimes be bad, but it's nothing compared to Los Angeles, Bangkok or Buenos Aires. Those seriously affected by allergies and asthma, however, should check the daily air pollution levels in newspaper weather sections. Australia is on the edge of the giant hole in the ozone, making sun block a necessity.

URBAN PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Despite Sydney's overall beauty, this modern city was originally built with very little urban planning, confounded by a history of ruthless developers and corruption. It's taken public outcry and union 'green bans' to save many parks and historic areas (such as Potts Point and The Rocks) from the wrecking ball.

Circular Quay is a prime example of muddy vision; it's been the victim of more architectural abortions and near-sighted planning initiatives than is decent for what should be the city's showcase. On the plus side, recent redevelopments around Woollloomooloo and Walsh Bays have been handled sensitively.

THE LIFE AQUATIC

The movie *Finding Nemo* features a crew of cool-dude turtles surfing the East Australian Current. One suspects that they would get on mighty fine with Grant Willis, the senior aquarist at Sydney Aquarium (p71). This handsome 35-year-old bloke from Bronte with an applied science degree in coastal management seems like he'd be more comfortable on a surfboard than in a stuffy scientific laboratory. Lucky for Willis (and the turtles), he's the man in charge of rehabilitating marine creatures that come into the aquarium's care.

Injured turtles, penguins, seals and other critters that are picked up by the National Parks and Wildlife Service come to the aquarium to convalesce after being fixed up by Taronga Zoo's vets before being returned to the wild. They've also recently released five penguins born at the aquarium into the Sydney Harbour colony.

Willis has long been passionate about Sydney's marine life; he had his own fish tank when he was 10 and learned to dive at 16. He suggests Gordons Bay near Clovelly (p97) as a great spot to get among it – 'you'll see blue groupers, seahorses and 80% of what you'll see snorkelling around Sydney'. His pick of the beaches is Whale Beach (p112): 'It's quieter and harder to access, and there's no sewage runoff.'

He's not a fan of shark nets, which he describes as 'random killing machines', destroying turtles and dugongs without offering much protection to swimmers. Should visitors be worried about sharks?

'Mate, you're statistically more likely to have too many beers and get bowled over. There are more people killed by falling coconuts than shark attacks,' he says, adding that there have been no shark fatalities in Sydney since the 1960s. 'Drowning is more of a problem. Pay attention to the surf clubs and swim between the flags'.

One development that has him excited is the increase in the number of Humpbacks and Southern Right Whales along the coast. They're getting closer to shore and more confident – one even swam into Darling Harbour recently. From June to November there are plenty of tour operators that will get you close to these amazing creatures (see p225). Willis doesn't think the attention causes the whales any great concern: 'If you annoy them, chances are they'll just dive down and piss off'.

So what can visitors do to keep Australia's marine environment healthy? According to Willis, a great first step is to dispose of your rubbish properly. Cigarette butts stubbed out on the street end up in the harbour with the next big downpour. Don't collect shellfish and, if fishing, respect catch limits and don't use small fish as bait.

For information on the Sydney Aquarium Conservation Foundation, see www.sydneyaquarium.com.au/NonProfit/NON050.asp. For tips on choosing sustainable seafood, see p138.

WHEN THE CRITTERS TURN NASTY

Australia is famous for harbouring the lion's share of the world's most poisonous creatures. You might hear that eight out of 10 of the world's most poisonous snakes live in Australia, or that an innocent-looking cone snail could kill you with one prick, or that there are crocodiles that hunt out in the ocean – and of course all of these would be true. But don't panic yet; the chances of you running into any of these critters, especially in central Sydney, are pretty slim.

Although there are venomous snakes in Sydney's national parks, few are aggressive, and unless you have the misfortune to tread on one you're unlikely to be bitten. Snake bites don't cause instantaneous death and antivenins are usually available. Keep the victim calm and still, wrap the bitten limb tightly, as you would for a sprained ankle, then attach a splint to immobilise it. Then seek medical help, with the dead snake for identification, if possible.

There are a few nasty spiders around, including the funnel-web and the redback. The funnel-web bite is treated in the same way as a snake bite. For redback bites, apply ice and seek medical attention. Again, these are not creatures you're likely to find snuggling up to you in bed; these spiders like to hang around gardens and wood piles, not in hotel rooms or under restaurant chairs.

Other waterside critters to watch for include the stone fish (with poisonous spines) and the deadly blue-ringed octopus (they're small and hang around in rock pools – signs will be posted if there's a danger). Another threat is the small bluebottle jellyfish, which you can often find washed up on the shores of Sydney's beaches (don't touch it!). In the water they look like bright blue sacs with trailing tentacles up to 2m long. Stings aren't fatal but do cause severe pain and leave red welts. Remove any part still attached to the skin with tweezers or a gloved hand and apply ice and an anaesthetic cream. In extreme cases, go see the doc!

Sydney just keeps getting bigger, stretching its boundaries to house a growing population. From the original colony at The Rocks, things developed outwards in ever-expanding circles, and now the city is reaching its limits to the north and south (abutting national parks) and to the west (edging the Blue Mountains). This only leaves the agricultural southwest and northwest corridors open for expansion, and development plans into these areas will no doubt become politically controversial.

To the anger of many residents, the state government has continually passed roading projects on to private developers, adding to the hefty number of tolls for motorists to live with. In 2005 an outcry greeted the opening of the Cross City Tunnel, a 2km-long underground stretch of toll road that connects East Sydney and Darling Harbour. Not only had the good burghers of Sydney had to endure endless disturbance during its construction, existing public roads were altered to force people to use the pricey private toll road. People voted with their feet (or should that be wheels) and boycotted the tunnel, leaving the city traffic worse than before. The city was forced to back down and reopen the roads it had blocked. Ironically, it now faces a major lawsuit from the company that built the tunnel, blaming the city for its insolvency.

MEDIA

Packer and Murdoch: two media dynasties that engender a mix of fear, respect and loathing throughout the world. Their influence is felt no more strongly than in their own country. Australia's media ownership is one of the most concentrated in the world, with most daily newspapers owned by two organisations.

Kerry Packer was Australia's richest man before his death in 2005. His enormous media empire Publishing & Broadcasting Ltd (PBL) owns Channel 9 (TV) and Australian Consolidated Press. All in all PBL owns 60% of all magazines sold in Australia, including the Sydney-based *Bulletin* (news and current affairs), *Woman's Day* (celebrity gossip and

top picks

MEDIA WEBSITES

Sydney Morning Herald (www.smh.com.au) Newspaper.

The Australian (www.theaustralian.news.com.au) Newspaper.

The Chaser (www.chaser.com.au) Satirical newspaper.

ABC (www.abc.com.au) TV and radio.

SBS (www20.sbs.com.au) TV and radio.

local battler tales), *Australian Gourmet Traveller* (lovingly detailed food and wine escapes) and *Cleo* (fashion and orgasms for young women).

Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation owns Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*, *The Australian*, *Sky News*, *Fox News*, *Foxtel*, *Fox Sports*, *20th Century Fox*, the *NRL*, and dozens of magazines and local newspapers.

Another media heavyweight is John Fairfax Holdings, publishers of the *Sydney Morning Herald* (daily broadsheet), the *Australian Financial Review* (financial news), *Business Review Weekly* (business) and the *Sun-Herald* (Sunday tabloid).

The Australian media relies heavily on foreign newspapers, especially British and American ones, for its international coverage. Bylines attributing news stories to the *Guardian*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* (of London) are fairly common. Having said that, foreign correspondents such as the *Sydney Morning Herald's* Paul McGeough provide excellent independent coverage of, for example, the happenings in Iraq.

FASHION

Sydney's fashion scene caters to body-conscious locals keen to step out of their doorways as sleek and svelte as their wallets and thrice-weekly workouts can possibly make them. It's Sydney's climate that proves the major determining factor in wardrobe decisions. While there are plenty of over-the-shoulder glances towards Europe and the States for fashion ideas, no one's going to go crazy and start wearing floor-length fur coats to Puccini at the Opera House. Hot Sydney designers and fashion show darlings (see Australian Fashion Week, p17) include Sass & Bide (p128), Silence is Golden and Lee Mathews.

The city's fashion scene began to stretch its wings back in the 1970s, when stalwart designers such as Prue Acton, George Gross, Trent Nathan and Carla Zampatti won nods of approval from well-dressed locals who'd previously relied on foreign labels to fill their wardrobes. Australian designers, after all, were better placed to judge the needs of Australians when it came to getting dressed in a city where humidity and strong sunlight combine to create a tropical vibe for much of the year.

This laid-back ethos extends to the office, where pantyhose are not compulsory business attire for most women. While some ultra-conservative law firms or financial institutions may frown on women wearing trousers, this is not the norm. Men in the big city firms don't have it quite so easy: you'll still spot herds of auditors crossing the streets in dark suits and ties in the height of summer. Many offices adopt the practice of 'casual Friday', but then, some seem to have a policy of 'casual Monday to Friday'. If you're conducting business here, you may want to dress up, but be prepared to remove your jacket or tie early on in the day.

While local designers may sometimes seem too imitative to truly warrant their job description of 'designer', the one area where they are head and shoulders above the rest is swimwear. This is the country that invented the Speedo, after all. Australian designers' use of colour, cut and fabric make a trip to the beach that much more exciting. Labels to look out for include Zimmermann Swim, Tiger Lily and Expozay, which you'll find in department stores, surf shops and boutiques throughout the city.

One fashion personality who could sum up the Sydney experience is South African-born, New Zealand-raised Collette Dinnigan. A broken limb saw her housebound, with plenty of free time to start creating fastidiously detailed and sexy lingerie. Word spread, and after being besieged with requests Dinnigan decided to establish her namesake label in 1990. Enraptured women (and more than a few men) have flocked to her stores for her creations, which have come to include beautifully beaded and embroidered dresses and separates – and not just for stick figures either. The rich and famous have also discovered this treasure; join the ranks of Jade Jagger, Angelina Jolie and Halle Berry by donning one of Dinnigan's famous frocks. See p127 for details on her Sydney store.

SPORT

Sydneysiders – like most Aussies – are mad about sport, whether it's watching it, playing it or betting on it. In fact you'll often get the feeling that they would prefer physical activity to mental activity any day of the week. It's even been suggested that Australians would rather succeed in

GO RABBITOHS!

For a rugby league team that needed friends in high places, South Sydney (also known as Souths or the Rabbitohs) certainly managed to pull a few bunnies out of the hat. Try these names on for size: Ray Martin (host of *A Current Affair*), Andrew Denton (host of *Enough Rope*), Russell Crowe (*Gladiator*) and Tom Cruise (Australia's favourite ex-son-in-law).

Despite holding the record for more first-grade rugby league premierships than any other club (although the last one was in 1971), South Sydney was relegated to the scrap heap in the late 1990s. This was thanks to Super League and the business interests of the very rich, who had the local competition reduced from 17 teams to 14 in 1998. However, the Souths' passionate supporters did not appreciate this 'redundancy' and weren't going to go quietly. In June 2001, 80,000 green-and-red-clad supporters paraded from Redfern Oval through the streets of Sydney to the Town Hall at a 'Save the Game' rally. On 6 July 2001 the Federal Court of Australia gave the bunnies back their footy-playing rights and the number of teams in the comp was raised to 15.

While the Rabbitohs aren't usually at the top of the NRL ladder, it's good to know they're here to stay, and that a slice of local history is continuing. Since Russell Crowe (a lifelong fan) bought the club in 2006 their run of bad luck (and playing) seems to have ended. For current bunny stats see www.souths.com.au.

sports than in business. This national obsession makes for exciting times at the local pub and certainly contributed to Sydney's overwhelmingly successful 2000 Olympic Games.

There's plenty to see if you arrive in footy season (March to October). Footy in Sydney rightly means rugby league, but the term is also used for Aussie rules, rugby union and soccer. Rugby league (www.nrl.com.au) is especially popular in NSW, and Sydney is considered one of the world capitals for the code. The main Sydney teams in the premiership competition are Sydney City Roosters, South Sydney Rabbitohs, West Tigers, Canterbury Bulldogs, Cronulla Sharks, Parramatta Eels, Northern Sea Eagles, Penrith Panthers and St George Dragons.

Rugby union (www.rugby.com.au) is represented in Sydney by the Waratahs, and test matches by Australia's Wallabies against New Zealand's All Blacks provoke plenty of passion. Australian Football League (or Aussie rules football; www.afl.com.au) is growing in popularity since Sydney's beloved Swans won the 2005 premiership. Soccer is the poor cousin to the other codes, but had a boost with Australia's first ever qualification for the FIFA World Cup in 2006.

But there's more to Sydney than these macho pursuits; netball, swimming, basketball, cricket, tennis, hockey and surfing all have their avid fans. Surf life-saving competitions are popular – not unexpected considering the relationship between Australia and its massive coastline.

As for participation in sport, well, there's lots of that, too. Netball, swimming, tennis and golf are all well liked, and it's not unusual for workmates to band together and form their own league or 'comp' against workers from rival organisations. And, of course, gambling is another event that encourages personal involvement, with plenty of horse and greyhound racing venues (along with pokies at the pub) to feed the monster.

See p174 for more details.

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