

‘Aussie Way ’

Information about Australia

Australia possesses some of the most spectacular and diverse natural environments in the world. There are 19 World Heritage-listed Wonders and over 500 National Parks to explore. Discover the unique wildlife and spectacular landscapes; spellbinding tropical reefs and coastlines, vast distances of rugged remote terrain and magical ancient rainforests situated on the fringe of modern cities. Walk in ancient landscapes, swim in some of the most pristine water environments on earth or ski the snow-capped mountains. There are limitless possibilities and something for everyone.

Australia is the sixth-largest country in the world (7,682,300 sq. km) Lying between the Indian and Pacific oceans, the country is approximately 4,000 km from east to west and 3,200 km from north to south, with a coastline 36,735 km long. The dazzling diversity of landscape with its rich combination of mountains, deserts, reefs, forests and beaches is complimented by a vibrant multicultural population. Since 1888 many people from differing nationalities have come to settle in Australia. This diversity of influences has created a cultural environment that is lively, energised, innovative and outward looking.

Australia is home to approximately 23 million people, mostly living along the coastal regions between Adelaide and Cairns. Situated on this coastline are the country's two largest metropolitan centres, Sydney and Melbourne. As well as the spectacular architecture and urban spaces that these modern cities possess, they also demonstrate the rich cultural diversity that makes up modern Australia. Canberra is Australia's capital city, situated halfway between Sydney and Melbourne, it is a modern 'Garden City' purpose built to house Australia's parliamentary and official buildings. Perth in Western Australia and Darwin in the Northern Territory are more isolated urban centres, situated across the desert from most Australians. The red centre of Australia is sparsely populated.

Australia has an important heritage from its indigenous people, which plays a defining role in the cultural landscape. Aboriginal Australians are custodians of the world's most ancient living culture which is expressed through art, story-telling, dance, music and the land itself. The story of the Dreamtime provides a spiritual understanding of the land and dates back at least 50,000 years. Many Dreamtime myths and spirits, painted, sculpted and etched over thousands of years can be viewed in vast open-air rock art galleries throughout Australia.

The majority of Australia experiences temperate weather for most of the year. The northern states of Australia are typically warm all the time, with the southern states experiencing cool winters but rarely sub-zero temperatures. Snow falls on the higher mountains during the winter months, enabling skiing in southern New South Wales and Victorian ski resorts, as well as the smaller resorts in Australia's island state, Tasmania.

The choices for travelling Australia are as diverse as the country itself. There are journeys that showcase our cities, states and territories and iconic destinations. From short city breaks to walking trails, nature journeys, coastal drives and epic journeys across the outback.

History of Australia

Aboriginal people dream on a timeless continent

Australia's Aboriginal people were thought to have arrived here by boat from South East Asia during the last Ice Age, at least 50,000 years ago. At the time of European discovery and settlement, up to one million Aboriginal people lived across the continent as hunters and gatherers. They were scattered in 300 clans and spoke 250 languages and 700 dialects. Each clan had a spiritual connection with a specific piece of land. However, they also travelled widely to trade, find water and seasonal produce and for ritual and totemic gatherings.

Despite the diversity of their homelands - from outback deserts and tropical rainforests to snow-capped mountains – all Aboriginal people share a belief in the timeless, magical realm of the Dreamtime. According to Aboriginal myth, totemic spirit ancestors forged all aspects of life during the Dreamtime of the world's creation. These spirit ancestors continue to connect natural phenomena, as well as past, present and future through every aspect of Aboriginal culture.

Britain arrives and brings its convicts

A number of European explorers sailed the coast of Australia, then known as New Holland, in the 17th century. However it wasn't until 1770 that Captain James Cook chartered the east coast and claimed it for Britain. The new outpost was put to use as a penal colony and on 26 January 1788, the First Fleet of 11 ships carrying 1,500 people – half of them convicts – arrived in Sydney Harbour. Until penal transportation ended in 1868, 160,000 men and women came to Australia as convicts.

While free settlers began to flow in from the early 1790s, life for prisoners was harsh. Women were outnumbered five to one and lived under constant threat of sexual exploitation. Male re-offenders were brutally flogged and could be hung for crimes as petty as stealing. The Aboriginal people displaced by the new settlement suffered even more. The dispossession of land and illness and death from introduced diseases disrupted traditional lifestyles and practices.

Squatters push across the continent

By the 1820s, many soldiers, officers and emancipated convicts had turned land they received from the government into flourishing farms. News of Australia's cheap land and bountiful work was bringing more and more boatloads of adventurous migrants from Britain. Settlers or 'squatters' began to move deeper into Aboriginal territories – often with a gun - in search of pasture and water for their stock.

In 1825, a party of soldiers and convicts settled in the territory of the Yuggera people, close to modern-day Brisbane. Perth was settled by English gentlemen in 1829, and 1835 a squatter sailed to Port Phillip Bay and chose the location for Melbourne. At the same time a private British company, proud to have no convict links, settled Adelaide in South Australia.

Gold fever brings wealth, migrants and rebellion

Gold was discovered in New South Wales and central Victoria in 1851, luring thousands of young men and some adventurous young women from the colonies. They were joined by boat loads of prospectors from China and a chaotic carnival of entertainers, publicans, illicit liquor-sellers, prostitutes and quacks from across the world. In Victoria, the British governor's attempts to impose order - a monthly licence and heavy-handed troopers - led to the bloody anti-authoritarian struggle of the Eureka stockade in 1854. Despite the violence on the goldfields, the wealth from gold and wool brought immense investment to Melbourne and Sydney and by the 1880s they were stylish modern cities.

Australia becomes a nation

Australia's six states became a nation under a single constitution on 1 January 1901. Today Australia is home to people from more than 200 countries.

Australians go to war

The First World War had a devastating effect on Australia. There were less than 3 million men in 1914, yet almost 400,000 of them volunteered to fight in the war. An estimated 60,000 died and tens of thousands were wounded. In reaction to the grief, the 1920s was a whirlwind of new cars and cinemas, American jazz and movies and fervour for the British Empire. When the Great Depression hit in 1929, social and economic divisions widened and many Australian financial institutions failed. Sport was the national distraction and sporting heroes such as the racehorse Phar Lap and cricketer Donald Bradman gained near-mythical status.

During the Second World War, Australian forces made a significant contribution to the Allied victory in Europe, Asia and the Pacific. The generation that fought in the war and survived came out of it with a sense of pride in Australia's capabilities.

New Australians arrive to a post-war boom

After the war ended in 1945, hundreds of thousands of migrants from across Europe and the Middle East arrived in Australia, many finding jobs in the booming manufacturing sector. Many of the women who took factory jobs while the men were at war continued to work during peacetime.

Australia's economy grew throughout the 1950s with major nation-building projects such as the Snowy Mountains Hydroelectric Scheme in the mountains near Canberra. International demand grew for Australia's major exports of metals, wools, meat and wheat and suburban Australia also prospered. The rate of home ownership rose dramatically from barely 40 per cent in 1947 to more than 70 per cent by the 1960s.

Australia loosens up

Like many other countries, Australia was swept up in the revolutionary atmosphere of the 1960s. Australia's new ethnic diversity, increasing independence from Britain and popular resistance to the Vietnam War all contributed to an atmosphere of political, economic and social change. In 1967, Australians voted overwhelmingly 'yes' in a national referendum to let the federal government make laws on behalf of Aboriginal Australians and include them in future censuses. The result was the culmination of a strong reform campaign by both Aboriginal and white Australians.

In 1972, the Australian Labor Party under the idealistic leadership of lawyer Gough Whitlam was elected to power, ending the post-war domination of the Liberal and Country Party coalition. Over the next three years, his new government ended conscription, abolished university fees and introduced free universal

health care. It abandoned the White Australia policy, embraced multiculturalism and introduced no-fault divorce and equal pay for women. However by 1975, inflation and scandal led to the Governor-General dismissing the government. In the subsequent general election, the Labor Party suffered a major defeat and the Liberal–National Coalition ruled until 1983.

Since the 1970s

Between 1983 and 1996, the Hawke–Keating Labor governments introduced a number of economic reforms, such as deregulating the banking system and floating the Australian dollar. In 1996 a Coalition Government led by John Howard won the general election and was re-elected in 1998, 2001 and 2004. The Liberal–National Coalition Government enacted several reforms, including changes in the taxation and industrial relations systems. In 2007 the Labor Party led by Kevin Rudd was elected with an agenda to reform Australia's industrial relations system, climate change policies, and health and education sectors.

Season

Australia is a country for all seasons. You can do practically anything here, at any time of year. There are four seasons across most of the country and a wet and dry season in our tropical north.

Summer in Australia, from December to February, is a great time to get outdoors. Swim Sydney's beaches or hike Tasmania's Overland Track. March to May heralds Australia's autumn, a season of fiery foliage in Canberra and the Formula 1 Grand Prix in Melbourne. Australia's winter, from June to August, offers snow skiing in the Australian Alps. Alternatively, take a winter sun holiday. Snorkel in the temperate Great Barrier Reef or 4WD through South Australia's Simpson Desert. Spring in Australia, from September to November is the time to watch for whales and wildflowers as you explore the wineries of Western Australia's Margaret River region.

In tropical Australia, the dry season from May to October has clear blue skies and sunny days. It's the time to experience Darwin's vibrant outdoor markets, movies and festivals. December to March is the wet season, which is hot and humid with daily rainstorms. See waterfalls thunder through Litchfield and Kakadu National Parks or fly over Katherine Gorge when its water levels are highest.

Weather

Australia's climate varies greatly throughout the eight states and territories; there are four seasons across most of the country and a wet and dry season in the tropical north.

Australia's seasons are at opposite times to those in the northern hemisphere. December to February is summer; March to May is autumn; June to August is winter; and September to November is spring.

Time Zones

Australia is divided into three separate time zones: Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST), Australian Central Standard Time (ACST), and Australian Western Standard Time (AWST).

AEST is equal to Coordinated Universal Time plus 10 hours (UTC +10).

ACST is equal to Coordinated Universal Time plus 9½ hours (UTC +9½).

AWST is equal to Coordinated Universal Time plus 8 hours (UTC +8).

Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) covers the eastern states of [Queensland](#), [New South Wales](#), [Victoria](#), [Tasmania](#) and the [Australian Capital Territory](#) (ACT). AEST is equal to Coordinated Universal Time plus 10 hours (UTC +10)

Australian Central Standard Time (ACST) covers the state of [South Australia](#), the town of Broken Hill in western New South Wales and the [Northern Territory](#). ACST is equal to Coordinated Universal Time plus 9½ hours (UTC +9½).

Australian Western Standard Time (AWST) covers the state of [Western Australia](#). AWST is equal to Coordinated Universal Time plus 8 hours (UTC +8).

In the Australian summer, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and the ACT turn their clocks forward one hour to Daylight Saving Time (DST). Daylight Saving Time begins at 2am (AEST) on the first Sunday in October and ends at 3am (Australian Eastern Daylight Time) on the first Sunday in April.

NSW, ACT, Victoria and Tasmania move from AEST to Australian Eastern Daylight Time (AEDT), UTC +11. South Australia and the NSW town of Broken Hill move from ACST to Australian Central Daylight Time (ACDT), UTC +10½.

Daylight saving is not observed in Queensland, the Northern Territory or Western Australia. The International Date Line crossing the Pacific Ocean changes the date by one day. If you cross the date line moving east, you subtract a day; if travelling west you add on a day (with local variations). Travelling direct from Los Angeles or London to Australia you arrive two days later; travelling back, you arrive the same day you departed.

Getting Around Australia

Getting around by plane

Flying is the best way to cover Australia's large distances in a short time. Australia's domestic airlines – including Qantas, Virgin Australia, Jetstar, Tiger Airways and Rex – serve all state capital cities and many regional cities. Competition between domestic airlines means that some great value fares are available, especially if you book in advance.

Getting around by bus

Coach and bus travel in Australia is comfortable, efficient and reasonably priced. Long-distance coaches generally have air conditioning, reading lights, adjustable seats and free wifi. Australia's national coach operator, Greyhound, offers hop on hop off passes for popular routes, short trip passes and flexible passes based on the amount of kilometres you wish to travel.

Getting around by car

Australia has a vast network of well-maintained roads and some of the most beautiful road trips in the world. Follow Victoria's Great Ocean Road as it hugs our spectacular southeast coastline or experience Australia's Red Centre in an epic drive across the desert. You'll find car rental companies at major airports and central city locations; so hire a car, 4WD, caravan or motorbike and hit the highway.

Getting around by train

Train travel is a convenient, affordable and scenic way to explore Australia. TrainLink runs services between Sydney and the regional centres of New South Wales, and along Australia's east coast to Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra. V-Line trains connect Melbourne with regional hubs in Victoria, Queensland Rail covers Queensland and TransWA crisscrosses through Western Australia.

There are also spectacular rail journeys such as The Ghan and Indian Pacific, which sweep across the continent, offering comfort and a sense of nostalgic romance. The Indian Pacific travels between Sydney and Perth, stopping at Broken Hill, Adelaide and Kalgoorlie; the legendary Ghan travels between Adelaide and Darwin, taking in Australia's Red Centre and the tropical Top End.

Getting around by ferry

The Spirit of Tasmania operates a nightly passenger and vehicle ferry service between Melbourne, the capital of Victoria, and Devonport in Tasmania with extra services during peak periods. SeaLink ferries connect Cape Jervis in South Australia (approximately 108km/67 miles south of Adelaide) and Kangaroo Island several times a day. There are also ferry services in our capital cities, connecting suburbs around Sydney Harbour, on the Swan River in Perth and on the Brisbane River.

Finding your way on foot

In Australia you can tackle some of the longest tracks and trails in the world – impressive journeys of a thousand kilometres or more that can take several weeks to complete. From the Overland Track through Tasmania's World Heritage-listed wilderness to the Larapinta Trail across the West MacDonnell Ranges in the Northern Territory, these hikes let you discover spectacular landscapes while stretching your legs.

Travelling with a disability

In Australia, airlines, trains, buses and ferries are accessible to people using a wheelchair or mobility device. Australia's airports provide services for people with disabilities and are able to assist with baggage, getting around the airport and getting on and off the plane. For more information visit the Australia For All, Can Go Everywhere and Nican websites.

Health & Safety Information

1) Australia is a secure destination where you can enjoy safe travel experiences the whole year round. Follow these tips to fully enjoy Australia's unique landscapes – from the vast outback to our wild ocean beaches.

- 2) Purchasing travel insurance that covers you for theft, loss, accidents and medical problems before you leave home is highly recommended. If you plan on doing any adventure activities such as scuba diving, bushwalking or travelling in remote areas, check that you are fully covered under your policy. Remember to bring your insurance policy details and emergency contact numbers with you.
- 3) Australia's public health care system is called Medicare and Australian hospitals provide world-class medical facilities and standards of care. The Australian Government has Reciprocal Health Care Agreements with the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, Belgium, Norway, Slovenia, Malta and Italy, which entitle travellers to some subsidised health services. It is best to check your eligibility before you leave home and have appropriate travel insurance to cover your stay in Australia.
- 4) No special immunisations or vaccinations are required to visit Australia unless you have come from, or have visited, a yellow fever infected country within six days of your arrival. However, regulations and medical advice can change at short notice, so check with your doctor and the Australian [Department of Health](#) before you leave home.
- 5) Medicine brought into Australia for personal use is subject to controls and must be declared on your arrival. It is recommended you bring a prescription or letter from your doctor outlining your medical condition and the medicine you are carrying. If you need to obtain prescription medicine while you are here, a doctor in Australia must write the prescription.
- 6) The Australian sun is very strong and can burn your skin in as little as 15 minutes, even on cloudy days. It is important to protect yourself from excessive exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays, and take extra care between 11am and 3pm when UV radiation levels are generally at their highest.
- 7) While travelling in Australia, be 'sun smart' and protect yourself from the sun by wearing clothes that cover as much of your skin as possible; applying a high-level water resistant sunscreen (SPF30+ or higher) regularly throughout the day; and wearing a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses. Protect yourself from heat exhaustion by sitting in the shade and drinking plenty of water to avoid dehydration.
- 8) In Australia, smoking is banned in enclosed public spaces to protect people from second hand tobacco smoke. This includes public transport, shopping centres, restaurants, hotels, cinemas and other public locations. Tobacco products cannot be sold or supplied to persons under 18 years old.
- 9) The phone number for emergency services in Australia is 000. The operator can connect you to police, ambulance or the fire brigade. Only phone 000 in an emergency.
- 10) Australia has a stable political system and low crime rate and Australians generally experience a safe lifestyle. However, as with travel at home or away, you should observe the same precautions with your personal safety and possessions.
- 11) For most of southern Australia, the danger period for bushfires is from late spring to summer, while in the Northern Territory most bushfires occur in winter and spring. Before setting out on your trip, check the Fire Danger Ratings (FDR) of your destination often included in TV, local radio and newspaper reports. When camping, use designated fireplaces, adhere to total fire bans and always extinguish campfires completely with water.
- 12) When swimming at Australia's [beaches](#) be aware of strong currents called rips. Always swim between the red and yellow flags, which indicate the section patrolled by Surf Lifesavers. Never swim alone, at night, under the influence of alcohol or directly after a meal. Always check water depth before diving in and never run and dive into the water from the beach.
- 13) Shark attacks in Australia are rare. Shark netting on Australian beaches deter sharks, but you can further reduce your risk by swimming between the flags on patrolled beaches and not swimming or surfing at dusk or evening. Avoid swimming alone, a long way offshore, at river mouths or along drop-offs to deeper water.
- 14) Crocodiles live in rivers and coastal estuaries across northern Australia, often changing habitat via sea. When travelling near crocodile habitats, observe safety signs and don't swim in rivers, estuaries, deep pools or mangrove shores. Also seek expert local advice about crocodiles before camping, fishing or boating.
- 15) Marine stingers are present in the tropical oceans around northern Australia from November to May. During this time you can only swim within stinger-resistant enclosures, which are set up on the most popular beaches. You will also need to wear protective clothing when swimming, snorkeling or diving on the outer Great Barrier Reef. Always observe warning signs. When bushwalking or hiking, you can avoid snake and spider bites by wearing protective footwear. If bitten, seek immediate medical attention by phoning 000.
- 16) The only harmful spiders in Australia are the red back and funnel web, however there have been few deaths from spider bites since anti venoms were made available in 1981.
- 17) It is safe to drive through Australia's remote and rugged areas, but you should undertake thorough preparation. Before embarking on a 4WD or [outback journey](#), ensure you have a roadworthy vehicle fitted

with GPS and two spare tyres. You'll also need maps, extra food, water, fuel and an emergency plan. Plan your route carefully and notify a third party of your expected arrival. If driving a conventional vehicle through remote areas, drive slowly on unsealed, dusty or narrow roads and always check road conditions before leaving major roads. Mobile phones have limited coverage in remote areas, so check your phone provider for coverage. Avoid driving in extreme heat conditions.

18) When planning a hike or bushwalk, consider the length and difficulty of the walk and check weather forecasts before setting off. If walking without a guide, tell someone where you're going and when you expect to return. Wear protective footwear, a hat, sunscreen and insect repellent and pack wet weather clothing and equipment, a topographic map and plenty of water. When walking, stay on the track, behind safety barriers and away from cliff edges. Avoid walking alone; it is best to arrange a party of three or more, especially in remote areas.

Travel Tips

Language

Australia's official language is English. However, Australia is a multicultural nation with a significant migrant population, so it's common to hear a diverse range of languages in Australia's cities and towns.

Currency

Australia's national currency is Australian dollars (AUD), which comes in denominations of \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 notes. Coins come in 5, 10, 20 and 50 cent and one and two dollar denominations.

Goods and Services Tax

Australia has a Goods and Services Tax (GST) of 10 per cent. You may be able to claim a refund for the GST paid on goods if you have spent AUD\$300 or more with a single business, no more than 60 days before departing Australia. [Tourist Refund Scheme](#) facilities are located in the departure area of international terminals.

Tipping

Hotels and restaurants do not add service charges to your bill, and tipping is always your choice. In upmarket restaurants, it is common to tip waiters 10 per cent of the bill for good service.

Legal drinking age in Australia

The legal drinking age in all states and territories of Australia is 18 years old. You will need to provide proof of age, either with a driver's licence or passport.

Emergency number in Australia

The emergency number for police, ambulance and fire brigade is 000.

Electricity

You may need an adapter in order to plug your appliances into the power sockets: the adapter required for Australia is Type 1 Australia plug. The plugs in Australia have two flat metal pins, forming an inverted 'V' shape, and occasionally a third pin in the centre. The electrical current in Australia is 220 – 240 volts, AC 50Hz.

Dial Code

The international dialing code for Australia is 61. Each region also has an area code, including Central East (New South Wales, Australia Capital Territory) with area code 02; South East (Victoria, Tasmania) with area code 03; Mobile telephones (Australia-wide) with area code 04; North East (Queensland) with area code 07; and Central and West (Western Australia, South Australia and Northern Territory) with area code 08. When calling from outside Australia, leave out the leading '0' from the area code or mobile phone number.

The outgoing IDD (international direct dialing) code from within Australia is 0011.

Mobile phone network coverage is available across Australia, however coverage may be limited in some remote areas.

Internet access and free WiFi is widely available at internet cafes, accommodation and libraries.

Post offices

Post offices are usually open 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday, with some city post offices open on Saturday morning. Travellers can arrange to collect mail at post offices throughout Australia.

Currency exchange

Currency exchange is available at banks, hotels and international airports. Australian banks offer the same range of services typical in other western nations, and Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) are widespread, although facilities may be limited in remote towns and the Outback. EFTPOS is also widely available in most Australian shops allowing you to pay for purchases with your credit or debit card. Fees may be charged on transactions, particularly if withdrawing from an international account.

Australia's largest banks

Australia's four largest banks are: NAB(National Australia Bank), ANZ (Australia New Zealand Bank), Commonwealth Bank of Australia and Westpac Banking Corporation. There are many smaller banks too, including ING Direct, AMP Banking and HSBC Australia. Banking hours are usually 9.30am-4pm Monday to Thursday and until 5pm on Friday. Some branches open on Saturday mornings until 1pm.

Usage / acceptance of credit cards and traveller's cheques

Credit cards such as American Express, Bankcard, Diners Club, MasterCard, Visa, UnionPay and JCB are accepted in Australia. VISA or MasterCard can be used everywhere credit cards are accepted. American Express and Diners Club are accepted at major supermarket and department store chains and many tourist destinations. A good tip is to carry multiple credit cards and a little cash. Merchants may impose credit card surcharges in some places.

Traveller's cheques are not widely accepted in Australia. If you do purchase traveller's cheques, it is best to buy them in Australian dollars as smaller shops, restaurants and other businesses are unlikely to know what the exchange rate is if you present a cheque in a different currency such as US dollars or British pounds.

Currency

There is no limit to the amount of currency you can bring in or out of Australia, however, if you plan to arrive in Australia with more than AUD\$10,000 in cash (Australian dollars or foreign equivalent), you must declare it to Australian Customs at the airport when you land. Find out more and obtain a reporting form on the AUSTRAC website at www.austrac.gov.au/travellers.

You may also be required to fill in a Bearer Negotiable Instruments (BNI) form if you're carrying promissory notes, traveller's cheques, personal cheques, money orders or bearer bonds. For further information, visit the [Australian Customs and Border Protection Service](#).

Regions of Australia

1) New South Wales

New South Wales lies on the east coast of Australia. The State capital, Sydney, is Australia's premier gateway and the largest city in Australia. Well serviced by flights from across the world, NSW also has a network of regional airlines, trains, buses and coach services making it easy to get around.

The regions within three hours' drive from Sydney offer a world of astonishing natural attractions - stunning wine regions in the Hunter Valley and Southern Highlands, beaches on the Central Coast and around Wollongong, World Heritage national parks in the Blue Mountains and at Barrington Tops and spectacular coastal and country scenery. Further afield, the Snowy Mountains is a year-round destination for winter sports and summer hiking; beautiful and unique, Lord Howe Island is a World Heritage-listed island paradise.

Country NSW, stretching across the rich agricultural lands and western plains, is criss-crossed with food and wine trails and touring routes amidst beautiful natural landscapes. Outback NSW has a mix of vast national parks, quirky towns, a thriving arts scene, rich and lasting Aboriginal heritage and the awe-inspiring magic of the desert. The North Coast of NSW provides a taste of classic Aussie surf culture with great surf beaches and a relaxed lifestyle, while the South Coast has a collection of stunning natural treasures - more than 30 national parks, marine parks and reserves.

Sydney

The lively inner Sydney neighbourhoods that are located around the city centre are packed with plenty of things to see and do and Darlinghurst, Stroll through markets and galleries, find that hidden treasure in a second-hand shop or spend a lazy afternoon in an outdoor cafe enjoying the scent of frangipanis in the air. Dining in Darlinghurst offers a diverse array of styles and flavours to choose from. Discover lazy breakfast venues, sip afternoon cocktails or have wine and nibbles in a tapas bar. Head to stylish restaurants and enjoy anything from late-night gourmet pizza to zesty Thai or classic French cuisine. To the east are Paddington, Surry Hills and Darlinghurst, each with its own style. Stroll through Paddington's famous markets, or peruse the latest exhibitions in its galleries. Catch a performance at Surry Hills' Belvoir St Theatre or visit Object Australian Centre for Design and Craft, which supports young designers. Darlinghurst is abuzz with cafes, restaurants and bars.

During the day, take your time exploring the fashionable designer boutiques on Oxford Street, William Street and the Intersection. By night, the street comes alive with nightclubs, pubs and late-night bars. Glebe, Newtown, Balmain and Leichhardt make up Sydney's inner west. Second-hand shops, restaurants, bars, cafes, bookshops and design shops line the main streets of each neighbourhood – Glebe Point Road, King Street, Darling Street and Norton Street, respectively.

The popular Glebe Markets take place every Saturday and offer everything from organic produce to vintage fashion and artworks. Visit bohemian King Street Newtown for great food, vintage fashion and bookshops. In Balmain, enjoy food, markets and architecture dating back to the early 1800s. Head to Leichhardt for all things Italian, including fresh pasta, coffee and homemade gelato.

With an industrial, working-class history, Redfern and Waterloo are now home to eclectic galleries, a slow-food scene, great restaurants and cool festivals.

Getting around inner Sydney is easy with regular public transport by bus, train and light rail services.

Sydney East

East Sydney offers some of the most famous beaches – like the iconic Bondi Beach and Coogee Beach. Enjoy them year-round by walking along a coastal trail or take in the view over a cocktail and dinner at one of the many outstanding restaurants in the area. Great shopping and other natural attractions ensure Sydney's East has some for everything.

Located between the city and the coast, Sydney's eastern suburbs are home to some of the area's best-known attractions, including Bondi Beach, Coogee Beach, Watsons Bay, South Head and Nielsen Park.

Bondi Beach has a style all of its own. On Sundays, head to the famous Bondi Markets and browse handicrafts, designer fashions, vintage goods and more. The promenade at the back of the beach is a favourite walking track and Campbell Parade is a popular grazing ground for Sydney's cafe society. Perched on the southern tip of Australia's most famous beach is one of Sydney's most spectacular drinking and dining spots, Icebergs Dining Room and Bar. For delicious ice cream join the queue at Gelato Messina and marvel at the day's special board. As night approaches, slip into something glamorous and watch the sunset from the comfort of a waterside bar. For something a bit more casual, try the Bucket List for a laid-back vibe beside the ocean.

If you love seafood, a visit Watsons Bay – Australia's oldest fishing village – is a must. Enjoy the Sydney Harbour views and indulge in a seafood feast at the iconic Doyle's on the Beach restaurant or, for something more low-key, try Doyle's on the Wharf.

The six-kilometre Bondi to Coogee Coastal Walk is a highlight. Enjoy the fresh sea air and views of white sand beaches. At Coogee, there are fabulous shopping opportunities, or dine in one of the many restaurants and cafes. Taking in a film at the heritage-listed Ritz Theatre in nearby Randwick is a splendid way to relax after a day of walking.

A short trip from the beaches are Paddington, Bondi Junction and Double Bay, offering some of Sydney's best shopping, with a mix of high-street boutiques and stylish malls.

In Moore Park you'll find Centennial Parklands, just 10 minutes from the city centre, you can go horseriding, cycling or hiking through the 360-hectare green space.

The Blue Mountains

Less than two hours from Sydney by road or train, the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area is one of the country's most spectacular icons. The surrounding picturesque towns of Blackheath, Faulconbridge, Katoomba, Leura, Megalong Valley, Mount Victoria, Springwood, Wentworth Falls, Hartley, Lithgow and Oberon offer a great range of restaurants and accommodation as well as an endless variety of fun things to do. For one-of-a-kind experiences visit Scenic World for stunning panoramic views of the region, or head underground at the Jenolan Caves, one of the oldest cave systems in the world.

Bushwalks abound in the region, an excellent way to take in the region's natural attractions, with trails to suit all comfort levels.

Discover the region's Aboriginal history and culture with guided walks, artwork exhibitions and traditional performances.

Fancy a spot of shopping? You'll find quaint gift shops featuring antiques, Australiana, books, confectionary, fine art and more.

The Blue Mountains make for the perfect holiday destination for families, nature lovers, and adventure seekers.

Central Coast

From Broken Bay at the mouth of the Hawkesbury River to south of Newcastle, the Central Coast includes a mix of bays and inlets, pristine beaches, lakes and lush hinterland.

While Gosford is the central business hub of the Central Coast, picturesque villages along the coastline, such as Pearl Beach, Ettalong Beach, Hardys Bay, Avoca Beach, Terrigal, Bateau Bay, Toowoan Bay, The Entrance, Norah Head and Forresters Beach, are popular holiday destinations with many accommodation choices available, from hotels and motels, plush resorts, welcoming bed & breakfasts, hostels, caravan parks and camping grounds.

There are so many things to see and do on the Central Coast. Book one of the many available tours. Don't miss the beautiful Somersby Falls in Brisbane Water National Park and the secluded beaches and bays of Bouddi National Park. Crackneck Point Lookout in Wyrribalong National Park is a great vantage point for whale watching.

If it's good food you're after, Terrigal and The Entrance have great restaurants, while Norah Head has a historic lighthouse that's well worth a visit.

Country NSW

This vast region of NSW has plenty of exciting holiday choices for all ages. Some of Australia's oldest country towns are here, offering a taste of pioneering history that can include a trip on a paddle steamer, uncovering 19th century colonial architecture and tasting wines made from some of the first grapes ever planted in Australia.

There are many fine regional art galleries such as the Western Plains Cultural Centre at Dubbo and The Wagga Wagga Art Gallery in Wagga Wagga. Regional museums are well worth a visit to learn about cultural or natural heritage such as Griffith's Italian Museum, Shear Outback in Hay or the Bathurst Regional Art Gallery.

The region is home to the internationally renowned Taronga Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo, a 300-hectare open range sanctuary that houses over 700 animals, including many rare and endangered species.

Natural attractions such as the Warrumbungle National Park offer world-class walks; the highest waterfall in Australia is the Wollomombi Falls in Oxley Wild Rivers National Park.

The New England North West region which includes Armidale, Tamworth, Glen Innes & Inverell is a great place to explore on a touring holiday. You'll find delicious food and wine, a wide range of accommodation styles and welcoming hospitality along local drives and trails.

Some of the best wines in Australia come from wine regions in Country NSW. Here great wine is matched by fine food experiences that include award-winning restaurants, country cafes and pubs serving great food, farmers' markets, or produce fresh from the farm. These regions include Mudgee, Orange, Yass and the Southern Highlands.

The Hunter

The Hunter region includes the towns, vineyards and national parks of the Hunter Valley, the Upper Hunter and Barrington Tops. If you appreciate good food and wine, you'll enjoy the Hunter region, where you can join a winery tour, or a cooking school, and sample wines from boutique winemakers and true "blue bloods" of the industry.

There are plenty of other things to see and do in the Hunter, including getting pampered at a day spa or indulging in a spa retreat, teeing off from a championship golf course or taking a hot-air balloon ride over the vineyards. Just follow the The Legendary Pacific Coast touring route to uncover the best of the region. Nature lovers will also enjoy the region. Barrington Tops National Park is a World Heritage-listed natural wonder. The Chichester State Forest, Copeland Conservation Area, Lake St Clair and Lake Liddell are all well worth a visit, too. Choose your own adventure, including easy bushwalking, serious hiking or camping out, surrounded by beech forests and snow gum woodlands.

Lord Howe Island

Lord Howe Island is a World Heritage-listed paradise located 660km off the north coast of NSW and less than two hours' flight from Brisbane, Sydney or Port Macquarie.

A holiday here is relaxing and unhurried, where getting around by bike or on foot is the way to go and there are plenty of activities to discover.

The island is an idyllic location for fishing enthusiasts as well as snorkellers and scuba divers. You can cast off at Blinky Beach for Australian salmon or snorkel straight off the sand at Neds Beach where you can also hand-feed fish. Enjoy a wide range of other watersports including surfing, kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding, kite surfing and windsurfing.

Lord Howe Island's famous twin peaks, breathtaking views and natural forest make it ideal for walkers and hikers to discover the island on foot. Lord Howe is also one of Australia's premier birdwatching destinations. There's no better way to seek out Lord Howe's 130 permanent and migratory bird species or 64 species of flowering plants than on well marked walking tracks. Challenge yourself on a one-day, guided climb of Mount Gower (875m), considered one of the world's best hikes, or take a more leisurely walk under lush forest canopies in the Valley of Shadows.

A wide range of accommodation styles, sumptuous spa treatments, beautiful hotels and great restaurants make Lord Howe Island the perfect getaway.

North Coast

Visit the scenic North Coast of NSW where you'll discover a hinterland of lush river valleys and a coastline of sparkling beaches that are accessible from the Legendary Pacific Coast touring route.

North Coast holiday choices are many and varied: tackle the vast sand dunes of Stockton Beach north of Newcastle by 4WD, or scuba dive at the Solitary Islands Marine Park off the coast of Coffs Harbour.

Discover unique nature experiences in the North Coast's many national parks and reserves. Hike through the ancient forests in the World Heritage-listed Dorrigo National Park. The Yuraygir Coastal Walk is a multi-day walk that stretches from Angourie to Red Rocks within Yuraygir National Park. For coastal views at a more leisurely pace, Tomaree National Park at Fingal Bay offers a number of walks of varied length, including the short Wreck Beach Walk.

Whale watching is also popular at many locations along the North Coast. Humpback whales and southern right whales migrate along the NSW coastline throughout June and in the first week of July, and return southwards from around September to November. Observe the migration from several headlands and lookouts, or join whale-watching tours that set off from Byron Bay, Coffs Harbour and Port Stephens.

Snowy Mountains

Summer is a great time to escape the heat and head to the Snowy Mountains where you'll find a kaleidoscope of colour, Australia's highest point and breath-taking alpine scenery. Go bushwalking or hiking in Kosciuszko National Park. With glacial lakes, alpine meadows, snow gum forests and Australia's highest mountain, Mt Kosciuszko, bushwalking here is truly inspiring. The hike to the summit of Mt Kosciuszko is regarded as one of Australia's best one-day walks. Start from the top of the chairlift at Thredbo or from Charlotte Pass.

Explore the historic towns and villages of Adaminaby, Cooma, Dalgety, Nimmitabel and Tumbarumba on foot. Walk part of the 12 km Hume and Hovell Track to Tumbarumba Creek, or stroll along the 2 km path beside the Tumut River and past the pretty Riverglade Wetlands.

Mountain bike enthusiasts can hurtle down the challenging Thredbo Downhill. More leisurely trails are plentiful with tracks around Thredbo village, Perisher, Lake Jindabyne, Lake Eucumbene, Tumut, Cooma and Tumbarumba.

High country horseriding is also a thrill for beginners and experienced riders. Guided horse treks are popular for day trips, overnight or longer.

Throw a line into the crystal clear waters of a lake or quiet stream and discover the fun of fishing in the Snowy Mountains' pristine environment.

South Coast

Take in stunning scenery and coastal views along the 22 km Kiama Coast Walk, or the 31 km Light to Light Walk on the Sapphire Coast. See sleek fur seals up close, in the wild, at Montague Island off the coast from Narooma. Camp on the beaches of the Shoalhaven and go surfing in Shellharbour. Top it all off with some great food and wine at cafes and restaurants located by a river, overlooking the beach or amidst the vines.

The region includes Wollongong, Kiama, the Shoalhaven towns of Jervis Bay, Nowra, Mollymook and Ulladulla, while Eurobodalla towns include Batemans Bay, Moruya and Mogo. The southernmost towns of Bega, Merimbula, Pambula and Tathra are on the Sapphire Coast.

2) Queensland

Sun yourself on the golden sands of Surfers Paradise, snorkel through the technicolour treasures of the Great Barrier Reef and four wheel drive Fraser Island.

From Brisbane, visit Moreton Island, Surfers Paradise, and Noosa on the Sunshine Coast. Head inland for Outback Queensland or north for World Heritage-listed Fraser Island, Bundaberg's natural attractions, and Mackay, a gateway to the idyllic Whitsundays. In Queensland's tropical north, Townsville, Cairns, Port Douglas and Mission Beach line the coast along the Great Barrier Reef, up to the Daintree Rainforest.

Tropical North Queensland

Discover where rainforest meets the reef in the heart of Australia's tropics - Tropical North Queensland. A nature lover's paradise, this tropical escape offers a combination of some of the world's most breathtaking scenery with a diverse range of activities.

The region's environment is as unique as it is diverse with the spectacular depths of the Great Barrier Reef, the awesome heights of the Daintree Rainforest and the mighty vastness of the Outback all within easy reach of Cairns. Nowhere else on earth do two World Heritage listed sites exist side by side – the Great Barrier Reef and the world's oldest Tropical Rainforests – which are both renowned for their scientific value and natural beauty. In sharp contrast to the aqua and green colours of the reef and rainforest, are the rustic ochres and open spaces of the Outback and Cape York Peninsula wilderness areas that are home to geological and cultural wonders.

Inland from Cairns is the fertile plateau of the Atherton Tablelands containing ancient rainforests, stunning lakes and beautiful waterfalls. Ten Great Barrier Reef islands sit just off the coast and offer the ultimate haven to indulge in the tropical lifestyle. Whether it's an indulgent break or a life changing adventure, this stunning region offers a diverse range of touring options each day and an array of unique accommodation to ensure an unforgettable holiday experience.

Cairns

With World Heritage-listed rainforest on one side and Great Barrier Reef on the other, just 15 minutes from the Cairns international and domestic airports, Cairns is the main gateway to the Great Barrier Reef. More than 2,000 passengers depart Cairns' new Reef Fleet Terminal located at the southern end of the Esplanade every day to swim among thousands of colourful tropical fish and coral on the Great Barrier Reef and islands. Within easy reach of coach, four-wheel drive, boat, helicopter and seaplane tours, Cairns is the perfect base to start and finish of your tropical Australian adventure.

A modern, sophisticated city with world class shopping, dining, entertainment and cultural facilities, Cairns has dozens of restaurants, accommodation, bars, the Esplanade lagoon, our own national basketball team, and international art gallery. The Esplanade stretches 2.5km along the foreshore of Cairns CBD where the inner-city swimming lagoon is situated and ideal for year round swimming. Restaurants, bars, clubs, cafes and galleries line the Esplanade and offer sweeping views across Trinity Inlet. The Esplanade also has bike and foot paths, as well as children's playgrounds, skateboard parks, volleyball courts, exercise areas and barbecues. Cairns accommodation ranges from luxurious waterfront five star hotels and resorts to family friendly hotels, motels and cheerful backpacker hostels and share-houses. Central locations in the CBD offer walking distance to popular sites, or retreat from the hustle and bustle on the outskirts of the city.

Cairns Northern Beaches Cairns Beaches are uncluttered and uncrowded, and each beachside suburb has its own unique character and charm making it easy for you to find your ideal tropical beach in Cairns and Great Barrier Reef. Public transportation by Sunbus service all Cairns beaches several times daily, with the exception of Ellis beach, and all Cairns beaches are equipped with modern play equipment and council maintained BBQ and picnic facilities so you can enjoy as many days of low cost fun in the sun as your heart desires. Relax and indulge in Queensland's spa capital or mingle with the locals at one of the quiet beachside villages near Cairns. Northern beaches of Machans, Holloways, Yorkeys Knob, Trinity, Kewarra, Clifton and Ellis Beach are popular for their laid-back feel and range of apartment, luxury and guest house style accommodation.

Palm Cove

Palm Cove has earned accolades for its five-star resorts, fine dining and some of the best spas in the world. A relaxed yet sophisticated village lined with award winning restaurants, internationally renowned day spas and spa resorts, fashion boutiques, jewellery and art galleries, Palm Cove is Cairns' most prominent and famous beach. Centuries old "paperbark" Melaleuca trees line the casual Esplanade while sun lovers play in the ocean and laze about on the soft golden sands dotted with swaying palms. Palm Cove earned an international reputation as a place to relax and rejuvenate due to the abundance of modern day spas and luxurious spa resorts that line its shores and has been lorded by international

media including Vogue, Harper's Luxury Travel and Australian Gourmet Traveller as an Australian "must-do" for romantics and anyone who needs a break from the hectic pace of everyday life.

Surrounding Islands

Experiencing tropical life, exciting water sports and nature walks is easy at one of the region's islands including Fitzroy Island, Green Island, Bedarra Island, Dunk Island, Lizard Island, Double Island, Hinchinbrook Island, Orpheus Island, Franklin Island, or one of the islands in the Torres Strait. Part of the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef, all of the islands in the Cairns and Great Barrier Reef region are protected National Parks, home to thousands of endangered species of birds, coral, fish and other marine and wildlife. In many cases, the islands of Tropical North Queensland also hold strong cultural significance for indigenous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Romantic, private sanctuaries such as Lizard and Haggerstone Islands extend a tempting invitation to newlyweds and busy city dwellers looking for uninterrupted privacy and tropical beach relaxation.

Closer to Cairns are Green Island and Fitzroy Island. Green Island offers a five-star island resort, a variety of water sports, shops, restaurants, spas, interpretive walking trails, and modern conveniences making it an ideal location to relax and unwind with a tropical cocktail after a big day of scuba diving, sea kayaking, snorkelling, parasailing, jet skiing, wilderness hiking or fishing on the Great Barrier Reef. It's proximity to Cairns also makes Green Island perfect for families, day trippers or travellers tight for time. Less inhabited but still breathtakingly beautiful, Low Isles off the coast of Port Douglas, Fitzroy Island and the Frankland Islands off the coast of Cairns, and the "Family Group of Islands" off the coast of Mission Beach are also worth including on your Great Barrier Reef island itinerary.

Mission Beach

Mission Beach is a natural mid way point between Townsville and Cairns. The 14 kilometre coast of Mission Beach is made up of three named beaches; South Mission Beach, Wongaling Beach and Bingil Bay. To get there it is a two hour, 140 kilometre drive south of Cairns international and domestic airport and is accessible by driving along one of the Great Tropical Drive trails or from Townsville. Mission Beach is the perfect base to relax and explore this unspoilt natural environment.

Traditionally a quiet seaside town, Mission Beach is sometimes referred to as the "Cassowary Coast" in recognition of the largest population of the critically endangered Southern Cassowaries who reside here, a magnificent flightless rainforest bird that is the area's natural icon. Set among Wet Tropics rainforests and surrounded secluded sun kissed beaches, sugar cane farms, tropical fruit plantations and national parks, it's easy to be immersed in the scenery along the route between Cairns and Townsville. Mission Beach is situated halfway along the Great Tropical Drive and home to half of Australia's Licuala fan palms. Mission Beach also offers the tourist a vast array of activities ranging from eco-friendly and environmental tours to extreme sports such as tandem skydiving and white water rafting for adrenaline junkies.

Great Barrier Reef

Stretching more than 2000km, the Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral reef at 348 000 km², an area bigger than the United Kingdom, Holland and Switzerland combined. It extends from the top of Cape York to just north of Fraser Island, and from the low water mark on the Queensland coast seaward beyond the edge of the continental shelf.

Tropical North Queensland offers the closest and easiest access point to this majestic underwater playground where visitors can discover over 6,600 species of flora and fauna including 1,500 brilliantly coloured species of fish, 4,000 species of molluscs and 400 types of coral. Here it's easy to slip into the region's laidback tropical lifestyle with diving, snorkelling, sailing, cruising and island hopping. This is the ultimate diving destination with some of the world's best diver training facilities located in Cairns and Port Douglas. With courses from beginner to open water, advanced and specialist diving accreditation, the region caters for both novice and experience divers.

But diving is not the only way to experience this tropical underwater land. Grab some flippers and a snorkel or upgrade to a motorised snorkelling scooter to navigate the coral gardens, or choose platform walking with your own diving helmet. For those who prefer to stay dry, spacious pontoons, semi submersible and glass bottom vessels provide sound introductions to the Great Barrier Reef.

Karunda

Peaceful and scenic Kuranda is the traditional land of the indigenous Pammigiri aboriginal people. The picturesque mountain retreat of Kuranda Village is a vibrant little town surrounded by World Heritage rainforest. Popular for street markets, cultural theatres and nature displays, Kuranda also gives visitors access to Barron Gorge where local Aboriginals share their ancient knowledge of this tropical rainforest region and its cultural heritage. Leave the car in Cairns and visit Kuranda via the Kuranda Scenic Railway

and return on the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway for a rainforest experience with a spectacular view. Kuranda is the best place in the region to view the stunning Barron Gorge and the mighty Barron Falls waterfall, and is also home to the Australian Butterfly Sanctuary (the largest butterfly aviary in Australia), Bird World, Cairns Wildlife Safari Reserve, Kuranda Koala Gardens and the Rainforestation Nature and Cultural Park, where you can come face-to-face with wildlife, indigenous culture, tropical food and plants.

Port Douglas

Port Douglas, affectionately known as "Port", is a sophisticated, but laid back seaside village just 67 kilometres north of Cairns International Airport along the Captain Cook Highway. Shuttle bus, tour bus, taxi and limousine services depart Cairns domestic and international airports, as well as the CBD, for the scenic one hour coastal drive to Port Douglas several times daily. The closest town to the Great Barrier Reef with no traffic lights or parking meters in sight, Port Douglas is the perfect place to get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life whilst still enjoying cosmopolitan convenience and contemporary style in a tropical climate. This is the ideal base to explore surrounding Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage-listed rainforest wonders such as Low Isles, Cape Tribulation and the Daintree or join a 4WD tour and explore Cooktown and the tropical outback.

Whitsundays

The Whitsundays are made up of 74 Island Wonders, on the beautiful tropical coast of Queensland, Australia. Right in the heart of the Great Barrier Reef, a visit to the Whitsundays is a feast for the senses. The stunning natural landscapes of coast and islands are dotted with secluded beaches and friendly towns. Whether you choose to base yourself on the coast or on the islands, there's so much to do, you'll have to work out how to fit it all in!

Explore the incredible diversity of the sea and islands from the bow of a sailboat. Cruise through the islands and drop anchor for a quick snorkel or scuba dive. Spend a fun day splashing in the clear shallow waters of world famous Whitehaven Beach. Pick an island, or enjoy the spoils of a mainland resort with Coral Sea views at Airlie Beach. Get off the beaten track amongst the hillside national park trails on foot or mountain bike. Whether you have a whole week or just a weekend, the Whitsundays has something to impress you!

Whitehaven Beach

Whitehaven Beach is a definite "must-see" in the Whitsundays. The crystal clear aqua waters and pristine silica sand of Whitehaven stretch over seven kilometres along Whitsunday Island, the largest of the 74 islands in the Whitsundays. It defines nature at its best and provides the greatest sense of relaxation and escape. As soon as you arrive it's easy to see why it is the most photographed beach in Australia and has been named "Queensland's Most Beautiful Beach" by 'Keep Australia Beautiful' and Queensland's Friendliest Beach more than once. cnn.com recently named Whitehaven Beach the 'world's top eco-friendly beach 2010'. At the northern end of Whitehaven Beach is Hill Inlet, a stunning cove where the tide shifts the sand and water to create a beautiful fusion of colours. As the tide shifts, the white silica sand and turquoise shades of the inlet blend seamlessly to create a breathtaking view of swirling Whitsunday colours. For the best view, journey to the lookout at Tongue Point on Whitsunday Island. Time your lookout experience on low tide to fully experience the beautiful fusion of colours that surface. For bareboats, the best spot to anchor is in Tongue Bay, and tender into the beach to commence the short walk up the hill to the lookout across Hill Inlet and Whitehaven Beach and back down the other side to secluded Betty's Beach, at the tip of Hill Inlet. There are several ways to experience the beauty of Hill Inlet. Many companies offer day trips to Whitehaven Beach and Hill Inlet by ferry, power boat or luxury yacht. Most overnight sailing trips also stop here. Self-sufficient boaties and campers can even anchor overnight off the beach, or book a national park campsite and camp on the southern end of the iconic Whitehaven Beach itself. More on camping here. Scenic helicopter and seaplane flights over Hill Inlet promise amazing aerial views as the magical waters and sand dance below. However you choose to explore Whitehaven Beach, it will be an experience that you will remember for a lifetime.

Airlie Beach

The Whitsundays is a world renowned holiday destination, with Whitsunday icons like the Great Barrier Reef, Heart Reef and Whitehaven Beach at the top of millions of bucket lists the world around. Airlie Beach is the hub of the Whitsundays region, being the largest town on the Whitsunday Coast, almost entirely focused on tourism. Travellers are offered a great variety of accommodation from backpacker hostels to 5 star luxury hotels and resorts and everything in between. Being the hub of the Whitsunday Coast, Airlie Beach is the best place to base yourself for a Whitsunday holiday to give yourself freedom

and flexibility in your choice of activities and tours, sailing, snorkelling, bushwalking, relaxing and of course wining, dining and the famous nightlife of Airlie Beach.

Brisbane

Blessed with sunny days and plenty of action, Brisbane is one of the fastest growing capital cities in the world but is uncomplicated, laid-back and fun-loving. Brisbane comes alive each day as its subtropical temperatures call people from their beds year round to wake up and smell the coffee, soak up the sunshine and drink in the view of the winding Brisbane River. Walk through the City Botanic Gardens and dine alfresco along Eagle Street Pier. Climb the Story Bridge and abseil down the side, James Bond style. Run the 107 steps at the Kangaroo Point Cliffs... or just have a barbecue overlooking the city as the sun goes down. High-culture, no pretension Experience the festival buzz of South Bank, with markets, bars, restaurants, live performances and Australia's only inner-city beach, providing the ultimate free playground. Watch Broadway shows and explore the museums and art galleries of the Cultural Precinct. Discover independent dance, theatre and comedy in Fortitude Valley's eclectic performance spaces. Shop in boutique-filled inner-city boroughs – each with their own special personality. There are plenty of decidedly un-city places to explore within a short drive of Brisbane. Hand-feed wild dolphins on Moreton Island or camp on the beachfront at North Stradbroke Island. Indulge in local wine at a family-run vineyard. Hike through national parks and get high in the mountains of the Scenic Rim.

Sunshine Coast

On the Sunshine Coast, the only thing more refreshing than the water is the lifestyle. With its endless beaches, lush rainforests and easy smiles, it's a place where you will feel like a local from the moment you arrive. Choose your patch of sand from over 100 kilometres of pristine coastline – stretching from Caloundra in the south to Noosa and the rainbow sands of the Cooloola coast in the north – and soak up the warm sunshine and laid-back atmosphere. Paddle into the home of longboarding with a surf lesson at Noosa's Main Beach. Hire a boat, kayak or stand-up paddle board and cruise the calm waters of Pumicestone Passage or one of the many lakes and inlets. Build sandcastles, eat fish and chips, or just lay back with a book on Mooloolaba Beach. Swim, ride and run your way through a triathlon, marathon or fun run with the best views on the coast. From rolling surf to rolling hills, the Sunshine Coast Hinterland is full of natural beauty, cosy cafes and boutiques waiting to be discovered. Be entertained by local artists and stock up on arts and crafts at Eumundi Markets. Take in the view from the Glass House Mountains or wander through national parks and trails. Pair local cheese and wine in Maleny or treat yourself to high tea and antique shopping in Montville. Sample the 'Sunny Coast' With award-winning restaurants, food trails, vibrant food festivals and bustling farmers markets, the Sunshine Coast is one giant celebration of food and wine. Tick off your foodie bucket list with beachfront and rainforest restaurants worth travelling for. Sample just-picked strawberries and fresh-caught seafood at an outdoor farmer's market. Create your own cuisine at one of the many cooking schools.

Gold Coast

From the iconic Surfers Paradise beach to the sophisticated dining precincts of Main Beach and Broadbeach and out to the lush, green Hinterland, there's a new experience waiting for you at every turn on the Gold Coast. Theme parks, world-renowned beaches and year-round sunshine are just a few of the reasons 10.5 million visitors flock to this vibrant city each year - a destination which is as scenic and peaceful as it is fast paced and active.

Broadbeach

Boy has bustling Broadbeach come a long way baby. Once the little brother to big sister Surfers Paradise, Broadbeach or "Broadie" to locals, is all grown up. We could start in the surf, with its beautiful beaches, framed by lazy parks home to weekend markets and weekday yoga classes. Or wander down the Broadbeach Mall, peppered with roving street artists and framed by alfresco dining whose tentacles seem to keep spreading in all directions. Yes, you've now met one of the Gold Coast's dining divas, with everything from gourmet delis, to bistros and brasseries. There's five-star feasts to be had along here too, and seemingly a new restaurant or bar every time you blink. Not that it's overdone. That's not Broadie's style. If you do want some razzle dazzle, head across the Gold Coast Highway to Jupiters Hotel & Casino, with its 24-hour casino, bars, lounges, restaurants and shows galore. You'll also find the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre here, home to top international and Australian recording artists and business conference. Let's not forget that other icon – Pacific Fair – one of Australia's largest retail centres with more than 300 stores, cinemas, and casual dining. And when the sun and fun finally sets on your day, choose from a wide range of accommodation options. All the top brand hotels in Asia/Pacific

have taken up residence here, as have some super swanky apartments. Sure, Broadbeach has grown up, but it will always be Broadie to us.

Main Beach

Situated at the northern end of the Gold Coast, Main Beach was so named as it was the main surf beach to the town of Southport. A highlight of a visit here is to the beach itself, where the old bathing pavilion, Pavilion 34 to be precise, has been reincarnated as a casual beach café complete with chikko rolls, potato scallops, pineapple fritters and fish and chips. Away from the beach - popular with surfers due to its open shore break - toddle down to Tedder Avenue. Sassy socialites and salty surfies rub shoulders here in this strip of modern cafes, exclusive restaurants, bars and boutiques. For more shopping and style, take a wander towards the Southport Spit – or simply The Spit - to locals. Along the Gold Coast Broadwater opposite Southport, you'll encounter high-end hotels such as Palazzo Versace and exclusive shopping at Marina Mirage. The Southport Yacht Club also sits here and services the beautiful boats which dot these waters. Still further along this slither of land you'll find the iconic theme park Sea World. Continue a bit further along and you'll end up at The Spit and the entrance to the Gold Coast Seaway. The true beauty of Main Beach is that it's where the fish and chip set mix with the bold and beautiful in that true Aussie spirit of egalitarianism.

Surfers Paradise

The Gold Coast's original epicentre of fun has been rejuvenated, and is now overflowing with a renewed energy you'll fall in love with. Stay in beachside accommodation and ease into your trip with an emerging café and restaurant scene, explore the revitalised foreshore precinct, then later on, be swept away by the spectacular range of after-dark entertainment. When you add these with the world-famous beaches, 7-day late night shopping, family favourite attractions, and the new light-rail network connecting neighbouring precincts, now's the perfect time to rediscover an icon - Surfers Paradise.

Just 30 minutes from Gold Coast Airport, you'll discover that Surfers Paradise is a must see, must stay destination experience. Surfers Paradise is the entertainment capital of Queensland with an array of nightclubs, pubs, bars and clubs, all within a two kilometre range and most operating into the early hours.

3) Victoria

Hugging the tip of the Australian east coast, Victoria is Australia's second-smallest state, covering 227,600 square kilometres – roughly the size of the British Isles.

Packed into such a compact area is a wealth of diverse regional areas and attractions, from sweeping coastline and pristine beaches to national parks and forests teeming with wildlife to wineries, lakes and mountains offering skiing, climbing and hiking. Best of all, many of Victoria's unique and varied landscapes are easily accessible as day trips from Melbourne.

Melbourne Victoria's capital sits on the Yarra River and around the shores of Port Phillip Bay. Lauded for its sense of style and elegance, Melbourne boasts glamorous festivals and events, Australia's best shopping, a lively passion for eating and drinking, and a flourishing interest in the arts. Restored and preserved nineteenth-century architecture, built following the discovery of gold, provides a heady reminder of a prosperous age, while beautifully tended parks and gardens present a therapeutic respite from the pace of city life.

Melbourne and Victoria host some of Australia's most prestigious events throughout the year, including the Spring Racing Carnival culminating in the Melbourne Cup in November, the Australian Open Tennis Championships in January, the Formula 1™ Australian Grand Prix in March, the Melbourne International Arts Festival in October, the Melbourne International Comedy Festival and the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show in March and April. Your tastebuds will be rewarded with a number of food and wine events around the state.

Melbourne

Consistently crowned the world's most liveable city, Melbourne is an elegant blend of stunning architecture, tree-lined boulevards and cobblestone laneways brimming with some of Australia's most celebrated galleries, boutiques and food and wine experiences. The surrounds of Melbourne, replete with seaside villages, enchanting wildlife and undulating vineyards, are as diverse as they are breathtaking. Victoria's cultural and sporting calendars are teeming with world-class events. As the host of the Australian Open, the Australian Formula One Grand Prix, the Melbourne Cup Carnival, the acclaimed Melbourne Winter Masterpieces and much much more, Victoria revels in celebrating passions and delights in entertaining visitors.

Great Ocean Road

One of the world's most breathtaking touring routes, the Great Ocean Road is a journey that lingers long after the return. Culminating in a visit to the spectacular Twelve Apostles, iconic limestone stacks in the Southern

Ocean, the journey itself is full of surprises. The beauty of the Great Ocean Road is incomparable, as you soar hundreds of metres above the ocean, clinging to the cliffs, only to find yourself at wave level as you turn the next corner. Keep your eyes open and spot koalas clinging to the trees as you travel through the Otway Ranges, or look out to see for whale sightings from May to November. The route is peppered with cosmopolitan villages, renowned surf breaks, idyllic rainforests and remarkable rock sculptures, making the Great Ocean Road both a quintessential and yet entirely unique coastal escape.

Philip Island

Phillip Island is a diverse holiday haven, teeming with a range of natural and man-made attractions, enchanting visitors of all ages and interests right throughout the year. The tiny penguins that totter from sea to sand in the Penguin Parade draw a hushed and enthralled crowd every evening, but don't forget that nature lovers can also view koalas in the treetops from a boardwalk at the Koala Conservation Centre, or take a boat to the colony of 30,000 Australia fur seals at Seal Rocks. Those fond of a little more noise and speed flock to the Phillip Island Grand Prix circuit for a calendar of world-class racing events. Blend these iconic attractions with an array of sandy beaches, nature reserves and a host of luxuries for an old-fashioned seaside holiday, with a unique twist.

The Mornington Peninsula

The Mornington Peninsula is a gorgeous medley of romance and relaxation. Golden beaches and elegant seaside villages enclose a tranquil hinterland replete with day spas at Peninsula Hot Springs, rolling vineyards, boutique cellar doors and acclaimed restaurants. From prestigious golf courses and beachfront villas to Horseback Winery Tours and secluded walks, there's a sophisticated and rustic charm to the peninsula reminiscent of the best of European coastal living. Just an hour's drive from Melbourne, explore the Mornington Peninsula on a leisurely day trip, or unwind and savour its many delights over a longer escape.

Goldfields & Spa Country

Part of the Great Southern Touring Route, Victoria's Goldfields region is the ideal place to explore Australia's rich gold rush history. In the heart of the Goldfields, steeped in history, is the city of Ballarat - site of the world's largest deposit of alluvial gold. Visit Sovereign Hill, which recreates hustle and bustle of an 1850s gold mining settlement and try your hand at panning for gold. Explore the legacy of the gold rush, still evident in the magnificent architecture and tree-lined streets of the town today. Get up close to Australia's unique wildlife at the Ballarat Wildlife Park, and learn more about these beautiful creatures from the passionate staff. Just 30 minutes drive away is Victoria's Spa Country and the picturesque towns of Daylesford and Hepburn Springs. The waters of the region are famous for their relaxing properties, settle in and enjoy a mineral spa followed by a decadent meal of local produce in this gourmet area.

4) South Australia

South Australia is home to long summers, stunning beaches and award-winning wine, events and festivals. It's the gateway to the unique National Landscapes of the Flinders Ranges and Kangaroo Island.

The weather in South Australia has beautiful, long summers and mild winters. In summer, temperatures often soar above 35 degrees Celsius (°C). That's 95° Fahrenheit! It's perfect holiday weather but make sure you cover up and wear sunscreen. If you drink wine, you'll love South Australia. There are sixteen wine regions to choose from and you won't have to travel far to enjoy them. Adelaide city has more than 200 cellar doors on its doorstep, all within an hour's drive of the city. To get the most out of your time in South Australia spend some time in the city before heading out to the country regions. The Barossa, Clare Valley and McLaren Vale are all just a short distance from Adelaide.

South Australia is the wine and seafood capital of Australia, where the Murray River meets the sea and the gateway to Outback South Australia. The Flinders Ranges and Kangaroo Island are unique and spectacular. They are on the Australian National Landscapes register as places of great cultural, natural and spiritual significance. A World Heritage Listed site can be found the Naracoorte Caves National Park on the Limestone Coast. The South Australian coastline is over 3,800 kilometres long and is punctuated by towns, beaches, cliffs and jetties. Many coastal regions offer a brilliant blend of wine and fresh produce, including local seafood. The South Australian coastline has fantastic fishing, boating and surfing; head to Kangaroo Island, Fleurieu Peninsula, Yorke Peninsula, Eyre Peninsula or Limestone Coast for more brilliant coastal experiences. The Murray River winds through South Australia, on its way to meet the sea. Kick back and relax on a houseboat, or explore the river towns and wineries along the river.

Adelaide

Adelaide is a sunny, vivacious state capital that relishes good living. It's about fine food, beautiful surroundings, full-blooded sports and festivals that challenge and delight. Get ready to discover the nation's gourmet capital,

described by the New York Times as the 'culinary hub of Australia'. Whether you're dining on an inner city 'eat street', beside a beach or on a hilltop overlooking the state capital, you'll find chefs displaying real international savvy, creative flair and a true love for only the finest local ingredients. Adelaide enjoys sublime natural surroundings, flanked by the gorgeous Mount Lofty Ranges and calm gulf waters. So real outdoor living is never far away: from the city's centre it's just 20 minutes to blue shallows and golden sand – or 20 minutes to reach the Adelaide Hills, a haven of villages, cool climate vines, thick bushland and native wildlife. Yes, Adelaide is your gateway to Kangaroo Island wildlife, the Outback and famous wine regions. But when you discover a city that satisfies the tastebuds, the mind and the soul, you won't want to leave in a hurry. From January to March, the city revs up for a slew of summer festivals and sporting events, including the 'Tour Down Under', a UCI Pro Tour cycle race, the world's second largest Fringe festival, the WOMAdeelaide world music event, the Clipsal 500 V8 Supercar race and the renowned biennial Adelaide Festival of Arts, literally turning the city into a world stage.

Central Adelaide

The earliest suburbs of Adelaide and North Adelaide were built in 1837 to a visionary pattern of civic squares and boulevards. Today, this central area of the city is still noted for its wide, gracious streets and interesting mix of triumphal sandstone edifices, contemporary glass/steel structures and humble settler's dwellings. But what really sets the inner city apart is the fact it sits in a sea of green parklands – an astonishing 1,000 acres of very valuable real estate given over to botanic gardens, soothing river scenery, a beautiful Victorian zoo, century-old olive groves, bushland, sporting grounds and playing fields. Visitors find central Adelaide elegant and charming. It has a proliferation of trees and flowers and a remarkable number of Australian heritage buildings, many of them still housing valuable collections of art, natural history, books and historic treasures. Together with the large student population and the tranquil River Torrens, it's not surprising that comparisons are sometimes made with Cambridge in the UK, Boston in the US and Christchurch in New Zealand – but this is to overlook the sunny Mediterranean climate and a lively pavement café culture that reaches into all corners... You'll be amazed how easy it is to explore Adelaide, and how safe and comfortable you'll feel. No attraction is too far from another, in fact, the city provides free bike hire, free tram/bus travel within the central business district, and some of the most beautiful walking trails you could wish for.

Port Adelaide

The gateway to the migrants who built Adelaide, Port Adelaide has a rich and interesting maritime history as well as a handsome collection of period architecture. Today, this traditional working suburb is undergoing substantial changes, with major waterside developments bringing new investment and new perspectives to the area. The Maritime Museum puts the Port in context and offers lighthouse tours plus a chance to see the famous Port River dolphins. Nearby Garden Island is home to at least 25 wrecks, many of them showing above water: a three-hour Blue Water kayak tour will have you gliding among the old bones while hearing stirring sea stories. For a real Port flavour, don't miss the 1855 Port Dock Hotel, still serving its home-brewed brands of ale.

Glenelg

Adelaide enjoys a huge number of clean, white, sandy beaches. But its jolliest seafront is undoubtedly Glenelg – a beach 'burb with more than a little English flavour. Fronting the sand is an historic town hall, a string of hotels and numerous waterside distractions including a contemporary take on the seaside funfair called the 'Beach House'. A new marina and foreshore development provides gleaming new wine bars and restaurants and a place for people to park their expensive watercraft. Of course all eyes are turned towards the sea – sometimes to the Temptation Sailing catamaran that takes people out to swim with dolphins, or the very manic Hel-a-va Jet boat that throws adventurers over the waves at very great speeds. Glenelg is ideally reached by the tram used by both commuters and visitors. It terminates in the thick of the action on Jetty Road, a colourful collection of bars, restaurants, cafés and shops. Of course the beaches stretch away to the north and south of the city, all with their own characters and attractions. Yours to explore and enjoy...

Adelaide Hills

The Adelaide Hills are a heavenly revelation – striking highlands of cosy hill towns, dramatic bushland, rich pasture and bucolic 'corduroy' vistas of vines on rolling vales. Stirling is the dress circle town where wealthy Adelaide residents had their summer residences. Today, its intimate, leafy streets are where you can sit out to enjoy great coffee, breakfasts and lunches; the newly renovated pub is an especially chic retreat. Bridgewater is home to a real 'Hills pub' plus the famous Bridgewater Mill — regarded as one of Australia's finest restaurants. A walking trail next to the Mill's steel waterwheel will take you deep into the bushland of Mount George.

A little further into the Hills and you're in the home of some of Australia's best producers of Sauvignon Blanc, including Shaw+Smith and Nepenthe; Hahndorf Hill and The Lane Vineyard both serve gourmet food and drink on elevated decks. And so to a true cultural curiosity – Hahndorf, the German-style village where you can see original 1830's stone buildings built by the Silesian settlers, buy everything from beer-steins to hand-made knives, and occasionally hear German spoken in an obscure local dialect. Nearby is The Cedars, the original

house, gardens, studio and artworks of one of Australia's most celebrated artists, Sir Hans Heysen. A truly serene place. On the way back to Adelaide, don't miss Mount Lofty Summit: standing at over 710m (2300ft), you'll enjoy views over the city, the Fleurieu Peninsula and Gulf St Vincent, sometimes as far as Kangaroo Island.

Fleurieu Peninsula

For the best overview of the Fleurieu Peninsula region, you can take to the skies in an historic biplane, a military aircraft, trainer jet, hot air balloon or helicopter. Of course, most people go by vehicle (the whole area being within an hour's drive of Adelaide) but they're equally enchanted by the sight of long sandy beaches backed by hilly vineyards and rich pastureland. The wineries are part of the McLaren Vale region, famous for its red wines, not to mention almonds, olives and cheese. Of course it's another food-lovers paradise, with wineries like Coriole, d'Arenberg and Primo Estate offering places to unwind and indulge. Pretty towns such as Willunga, Port Elliot and Yankalilla have a charming mix of fresh local produce, artisan crafts, antiques and art. Beaches along the Peninsula's coast range from quiet, family-friendly shallows to rugged coves at the base of steep sloping headlands. Walking trails through conservation parks like Deep Creek, offer spectacular views. Victor Harbor is a stunning seaside town, and home to another delightful South Australian curio, the Horse Drawn Tram that takes passengers daily over a wooden causeway to Granite Island. Sea views from the island are spectacular, and the circular walk offers excellent opportunities of seeing Little Penguins, dolphins, sea lions and even whales during their breeding season from May to October. Bushwalking is superb on the tip of the Fleurieu Peninsula. You can take a relaxing hike on the Heysen Walking Trail in Deep Creek Conservation Park to enjoy astonishing views. Be warned, the trail keeps going – some 1500km (930 miles), all the way to the Flinders Ranges...

The Barossa

While the Barossa is famous for time-honoured wine names such as Penfolds, Orlando and Henschke, this rural region also offers a rich blend of the tranquil and the traditional. Nineteenth century European influences are seen in the churches, shops and homes in towns like Lyndoch, Angaston and Eden Valley. Settled mainly by immigrant Lutherans, the Barossa is passionate about celebrating its heritage and traditions. 'Slow food' owes much to the culinary techniques and farming practices that are alive and well here: you'll see their fruits on a specially designed trail of traditional butchers, bakers and wine makers; you'll also find them at the lively Barossa Farmers' Market in Angaston. One of our true culinary champions – in fact, a household name in Australia's kitchens – is resident Maggie Beer. At her Farm Shop, you can enjoy picnic lunches that properly utilise ingredients raised on the rich lands of the Barossa.

But of course, you're in the Barossa, which will always be about wine. Iconic sights include Jacob's Creek (yes, he actually existed and you can walk along his creek), the incredible views from Mengler Hill Lookout, the 20,000-plant rose gardens of Chateau Barrosa and the new Wolf Blass Visitor Centre. For the perfect souvenir, try your hand as a winemaker at Penfolds' Nuriootpa winery: pull on a labcoat, mix varieties to taste and have it bottled and labelled with your own name. The Barossa is an hour from the city through the beautiful Adelaide Hills. Be sure to stop at the Whispering Wall near Williamstown. A feat of engineering in 1901, the wall gets its name from the acoustic phenomenon that enables messages whispered at one end to be heard at the other, 140 metres away.

Kangaroo Island

Australia's Galapagos - Kangaroo Island (or KI) is the country's premier destination for wildlife. It's another of South Australia's huge wilderness areas – six times bigger than Singapore, or the same size as Long Island, New York. The island separated from the mainland 10,000 years ago, which was long enough for some species (like the KI Kangaroo and Glossy Black Cockatoo) to evolve differently to mainland species. But much more recently, this separation served as a form of quarantine, protecting animal habitats from excessive agricultural development, the damage done by rabbits and isolating the wildlife from predators such as foxes, rats and cats.

The wildlife on KI has thrived in and around the vast tracts of native bushland (comprising over half of the island, in fact) offering visitors the chance to see Australian wildlife in stunning natural settings. This is where you can see kangaroos coming out of the bush onto deserted beaches; where you can see the world's only colony of Glossy Black Cockatoos; where you can get close to thriving colonies of Australian Sea Lions; and with a little help from locals see the most elusive of Australia's animals, the likes of the Short-beaked Echidnas, platypus and Rosenberg's Goanna – the latter reptile growing up to a metre long. Other animals to see on the island include Little Penguins (best seen at night, returning from the seas to roost in their burrows), pelicans (the evening feeding time in Kingscote is a must) and of course the most famous – even infamous – residents, the koalas of KI.

5) Northern Territory

At six times the size of Britain and twice the size of California, the Northern Territory is a big place, with a population of just 200,000. It's known around the world for its natural icons, including World Heritage-listed Kakadu and Uluru, as well as an ancient Aboriginal culture, diverse landscapes, amazing wildlife, colourful characters and endless opportunities for adventure.

In the tropical Top End around Darwin, Kakadu National Park, Arnhem Land and Katherine, you can swim under waterfalls, bushwalk through rainforest, see ancient Aboriginal art, spot hundreds of species of birds, get up close to a crocodile or fish for the famous barramundi.

Further south in the Red Centre there's clear blue skies and rolling desert: genuine outback country and home to Australia's most recognisable icon—Uluru. Here you can go bushwalking, four-wheel driving and quad-bike riding, float over the desert in a hot-air balloon or sleep under the stars.

Australia's Northern Territory is one of nature's most untouched places, with World Heritage-listed national parks and famous natural icons that are accessible, remote and spectacular. These areas are great places to view native plants, birds and animals, go for a bushwalk, swim under waterfalls, join an Aboriginal cultural tour and camp under the stars. Australia's Northern Territory is home to two remarkably different natural environments.

Top End

The 'Top End' of Australia's Outback Northern Territory collectively refers to its three northern tropical and sub-tropical regions: Darwin, the capital city, World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park and remote Arnhem Land, and the Katherine region, further south.

In the Top End, travellers will experience a tropical climate, landscapes dotted with rainforest, gorges, waterfalls and waterholes, water-based adventure, Aboriginal culture and an outdoor lifestyle. The Nature's Way tourism drive links all these experiences together.

Darwin International Airport is a major gateway to Australia for international flights, offering easy access to and from Europe, North America and Asia. Within Australia, Darwin is four hours' flying time from most capital cities and is serviced by major domestic airlines. Darwin is also a popular stopover for luxury cruise liners, and the embarkation point for the growing number of expedition cruises exploring the Top End. From Darwin, visitors can access other Top End destinations by hiring a car or campervan, joining a tour, or boarding a bus or light aircraft.

The Top End, which includes Darwin, Kakadu and Arnhem Land, and Katherine, has a tropical climate and two seasons: the 'wet' and the 'dry'. The wet season (November–April) brings high humidity and monsoonal rain and storms, with temperatures from 25C (77F) to 33C (91F). During the dry season (May–October) days are dry and sunny, humidity is low, and nights are cool, with temperatures from 21C (70F) to 32C (90F).

Darwin & Surrounds

Darwin, the Northern Territory's tropical capital city, is modern, youthful and multicultural. Thanks to the warm climate, an outdoor lifestyle is enjoyed all year round at open-air cinemas, beachside markets and outdoor festivals.

Nature, culture and adventure are all on Darwin's doorstep. The waterfalls and waterholes of Litchfield National Park, the colourful Tiwi Islands and the wildlife-rich Mary River floodplains are all close by.

Darwin & Surrounds 'must dos'

sample local food, arts and music at the famous dry season Mindil Beach Sunset Markets, or suburban weekend markets in Parap, Nightcliff and Rapid Creek year round

drink in a famous Darwin sunset on a harbour cruise or dining at a waterside restaurant

get up close to a crocodile at a wildlife park or on a jumping crocodile cruise on nearby Adelaide River

learn about Darwin's rich and partly tragic history at the city's many museums

catch a film under the stars at the open-air Deckchair Cinema during the dry

join a guided fishing tour to catch a famous barramundi

bushwalk a rainforest trail, swim under cascading waterfalls and marvel at termite mounds in Litchfield National Park

fly over to the Tiwi Islands, meet local artists and watch them produce world-famous Tiwi art.

Kakadu & Arnhem Land

Three hours' drive from Darwin in Kakadu National Park you will see important Aboriginal rock art sites and exotic landscapes teeming with wildlife. Explore on foot, join a cruise or guided tour, spot crocodiles and birdlife, swim under waterfalls, and discover an ancient and fascinating Aboriginal culture.

Bounding Kakadu to the north and east, Arnhem Land is one of the Top End's most spectacular natural destinations. Its scenery is beautiful and diverse, with rugged coastlines, remote islands, rivers teeming with fish, monsoon rainforest, towering escarpments and savannah woodland.

Kakadu & Arnhem Land 'must dos' –

board a cruise on famous Yellow Water, a billabong brimming with birds and wildlife

visit Ubirr and Nourlangie, Kakadu's two main Aboriginal rock art sites

learn about local Aboriginal culture at the Bowali and Warradjan visitor centres
fly over Kakadu's wetlands, floodplains and ancient sandstone plateau in a helicopter or fixed-wing aircraft
explore the ruins of an early English settlement on the secluded Cobourg Peninsula
fish for barramundi in Kakadu's big tidal rivers or dozens of pristine floodplain billabongs
meet Aboriginal artists in their communities, watch them work and buy their art

Katherine & Surrounds

The outback meets the tropics in Katherine, the Northern Territory's third-largest town three hours' drive south of Darwin. The town is on the banks of the Katherine River, which flows from the nearby Katherine Gorge (Nitmiluk National Park).

The Katherine region extends from the Gulf of Carpentaria near the Queensland border towards the Kimberley in the west. Visitors base themselves in Katherine to explore the five distinctive areas within this vast region. Swimming, fishing, canoeing, bushwalking, camping and four-wheel driving are popular activities.

Katherine & Surrounds 'must dos'

hire a canoe or board a boat cruise and glide down Nitmiluk Katherine Gorge, spotting waterfalls, Aboriginal rock art and wildlife

jump in a helicopter and fly over the Gorge for a bird's eye view of the magnificent 13-gorge system

soak in the sandy-bottomed Mataranka Thermal Pool set in tranquil, tropical surrounds

in Katherine itself, listen in on lessons broadcast to an 800,000sq km classroom at the Katherine School of the Air, wander through Springvale Homestead, the Territory's oldest cattle station, or purchase local art in the many galleries

walk the 66km Jatbula Trail from Katherine Gorge to Edith Falls over 5 days

Red Centre

The 'Red Centre' refers to the Northern Territory's three southern destinations of Tennant Creek and the Barkly region, Alice Springs and the Uluru-Kata Tjuta region. These are the places overseas visitors usually associate with the 'real Australian outback' for their landscape of red dirt, blue skies and boundless horizons.

In the Red Centre, visitors can experience world-famous natural icons, Aboriginal art and culture, outback adventure, unique wildlife and colourful characters. The Explorer's Way and Red Centre Way tourism drives link Red Centre destinations.

There are two airports in the Red Centre: Alice Springs Airport and Ayers Rock Airport, near Uluru. Domestic airlines fly to both from most Australian capital cities. These airports are not serviced by international flights. International visitors can connect via Darwin or other Australian capitals for a flight to Alice Springs or Ayers Rock airports. The Red Centre Way is a popular tourism drive that links many of the Red Centre's icons. From Alice Springs, visitors can access other Red Centre destinations by hiring a car, joining a tour, or boarding a bus or light aircraft.

Central Australia, which includes Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Uluru, has a semi-arid climate and Australia's four typical seasons: summer, autumn, winter and spring. In summer (December–February), temperatures range between 20C (68F) and 35C (95F). In winter (June–August): 3–20C (37–68F). Spring and autumn bring warm days and cool nights. Temperatures can be extreme here; below 0C (32F) overnight in winter, and above 40C (104F) in summer.

Tennant Creek & Barkly

Tennant Creek is a small, friendly township between Alice Springs and Darwin, with a rich history shaped by Aboriginal culture, cattle stations and gold mining—it was the site of Australia's last gold rush in the 1930s.

The vast Barkly Tablelands stretch east of the town and are home to cattle stations the size of small European countries. South of the town are the sacred Devils Marbles, hundreds of giant round boulders, and eastward is the Davenport Range National Park, a 1120-square kilometre nature reserve.

Tennant Creek & Barkly Region 'must dos'

plan a sunset visit to the Devils Marbles, scattered boulders that glow red in the dying light

re-live the gold mining era on an underground tour at the Battery Hill Mining Centre

hear the local Warumungu people's legend of 'Nyinkka', the spiky tailed goanna, at the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre

explore the network of permanent waterholes and beautiful outback landscapes on a four-wheel drive through the Davenport Range National Park

get a true sense of the outback and capture a real feeling of freedom on a drive through long stretches of uninhabited land in the Barkly Tablelands.

Alice Springs

Australia's most famous outback town, Alice Springs, is a modern township with a rich Aboriginal culture and European explorer history. 'Alice', as it's simply known, hosts a jam-packed calendar of festivals and quirky events, and offers adventure experiences like quad-biking, bushwalking and hot-air balloon and camel rides.

The East and West MacDonnell Ranges stretch out for hundreds of kilometres on both sides of Alice Springs. They are an adventure playground with hiking trails, four-wheel drive tracks, swimming holes and camping spots.

Alice Springs & Surrounds 'must dos'

visit one of Alice Springs' many Aboriginal art galleries, where you might meet the artists and purchase their work

float over the West MacDonnell Ranges and watch the sunrise from a hot-air balloon

take in Alice Springs and the surrounding ranges from the top of Anzac Hill

visit the world's largest classroom at the Alice Springs School of the Airdrop in to the Royal Flying Doctor Service, which services an area of more than 7 million square kilometres

learn about Alice Springs' plants, animals and landscapes at the Alice Springs Desert Park

go along to one of Alice's famous and unique festivals and events, like the Camel Cup, the Finke Desert Race or the hilarious Henley-on-Todd Regatta

take a day trip or camp overnight in the 'West Macs', where you can swim in waterholes, bushwalk through gorges or four-wheel drive over rocky ridges

walk a section or the whole 223 kilometres of the Larapinta Trail, named one of the world's top 20 walks.

Uluru

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, 440 kilometres south-west of Alice Springs, is the spiritual heart of Australia. One of the great natural wonders of the world, Uluru (Ayers Rock) towers above the surrounding desert landscape to a height of 348 metres.

To the west is Kata Tjuta (the Olgas), a collection of 36 rock domes estimated to be 500 million years old. The third natural icon of this area is Kings Canyon, 300km north-east of Uluru in Watarrka National Park with 100 metre-high sandstone walls, walking trails, palm-filled crevices and views across the desert.

Uluru & Surrounds 'must dos'

walk around Uluru's 9.4-km base with or without a guide

see it from above in a helicopter or light aeroplane, from atop a camel's back or on the back of a Harley

enjoy a gourmet dinner under the stars against the backdrop of Uluru and Kata Tjuta at the award-winning Sounds of Silence

learn about bush tucker, art and Dreamtime stories of this sacred site on an Aboriginal tour or at the cultural centre

hike around the rock domes of Kata Tjuta on the Walpa Gorge or Valley of the Winds walks

conquer Kings Canyon's Rim Walk that takes in magnificent views, the weathered domes of 'The Lost City' and the 'Garden of Eden'.

6) Australian Capital Territory

The Australian Capital Territory was created to house the nation's capital Canberra. Tour the Australian Capital Territory from Canberra, home to Parliament House, the Australian War Memorial and the National Gallery of Australia, with its dedicated Aboriginal art galleries. Follow the Poachers Way to wineries and galleries, picnic along the Murrumbidgee Corridor and discover the wildlife, walking trails and Aboriginal rock art of Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Namadgi National Park. Explore the magnificent Australian Alps.

Canberra

Discover Canberra, Australia's capital city and a treasure trove of national attractions. Explore Canberra for Australian culture and history at superb monuments and galleries in this city surrounded by parklands and native bushland. Visit Parliament House, the Australian War Memorial, National Gallery of Australia and Questacon. Experience the the Balloon Fiesta in autumn, Fireside Festival in winter, and Floriade in spring. Explore the Australian Alps or Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Murrumbidgee River Corridor, just a short drive away.

Australian Alps

Explore Namadgi National Park in the Australian Alps - a world of silent bushland, breathtaking vistas and rich Aboriginal history just a 45 minute drive from Canberra. Explore pristine bushland and fascinating history in Namadgi National Park, a section of the Australian Alps just near Canberra. Climb or abseil the granite outcrops, bushwalk along the Great Alpine Walk, and mountain bike, fish and 4WD. See vestiges left by Aboriginal custodians, pastoralists and gold hunters, and meet emus, kangaroos, wallabies and cockatoos in nearby Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

7) Western Australia

Western Australia is one of the largest States in the world. The landscape is inspiring in its beauty and grandeur and includes pristine beaches, rugged gorges, unique rock formations, towering forests and secluded

waterfalls. Western Australia is a world leader in the production of minerals and petroleum, wool, seafood, pearls, premium wines and gourmet foods, has a strong agribusiness industry, and a growing services sector, which includes scientific and medical research, tourism, education, architecture, ship building and defence, engineering construction, subsea development, film, fashion, music and writing.

The climate is also varied, from the Mediterranean climate of the south, to the tropical climate of the north, meaning that you can find summer in Western Australia at any time of year.

Western Australia is divided into five tourism regions, each offering a diverse range of extraordinary experiences. The tourism regions are Experience Perth, Australia's Coral Coast, Australia's South West, Australia's Golden Outback and Australia's North West.

Perth

Australia's sunniest capital offers a vibrant, yet easy-going and natural lifestyle surrounded by the beautiful Swan River, Kings Park and Botanic Garden, and the Indian Ocean.

Perth city and its surrounding urban villages of Mount Lawley, Leederville, Northbridge, Victoria Park and Subiaco are brimming with dining, shopping and entertainment options. New bars and restaurants are opening frequently, laneways are being re-born, and shopping precincts are being expanded and refreshed. Culturally, visitors can indulge at Perth's Cultural Centre in Northbridge - home to the Art Gallery of WA, the WA Museum, State Library, the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, the Blue Room and the State Theatre Centre of WA.

Explore Kings Park and Botanic Garden. At 400 hectares, Kings Park is one of the world's largest inner-city parks – the largest in the Southern Hemisphere. Easily accessible from the central business district with superb views of the city skyline, the Darling Ranges and the Swan and Canning Rivers, Kings Park is rich in Aboriginal and European history and has more than 3,000 species of WA's unique flora. Visitors can dine at one of the restaurants or cafes, pack a picnic, take a walking tour with an Indigenous guide, check out local artwork at Aspects, walk across the Federation Walkway, marvel at the 750-year old boab tree and Kimberley Garden, and in season, watch a movie under the stars at the outdoor cinema.

There are plenty of destinations within an hour of Perth's central business district. Take a short ferry ride to the aquamarine waters and pristine beaches of Rottnest Island; tantalise your tastebuds in the Swan Valley (WA's oldest wine growing region, celebrating 180 years of wine-making in 2014); enjoy the historic sights of York; swim with the dolphins at Rockingham; explore the seaside city of Mandurah; or explore the cafes and galleries of the historic and eclectic port city of Fremantle.

Watch the sunset over one of Perth's amazing beaches. Home to 19 pristine metropolitan beaches, it's easy to find your own slice of white sand to relax and enjoy one WA's famous sunsets. While surfers head to Scarborough and Trigg for the waves, swimmers looking for calmer waters cool off at Cottesloe or one of the more sheltered northern beaches such as Mettam's Pool between Sorrento Beach and Trigg.

South West

Australia's South West includes the Margaret River Wine Region and the Great Southern, and is home to world-class food and wine, beautiful beaches, surfing, cave systems, tall tree forests, and in-season, whale-watching and wildflowers. The region is one of the world's 34 biodiversity hot-spots with 80 per cent of plant species found nowhere else on Earth.

World-famous for its spectacular coastline and magnificent surf and swimming beaches. Popular swimming spots include the calm and protected waters of Geographe Bay, Greens Pool in Denmark and Little Beach near Albany. Surf conditions are so good in the South West that each year the world's best surfers travel to the region for the Drug Aware Margaret River Pro, a world champion surfing event. Underwater, divers can explore a series of ship wrecks which are dotted along the coast, or head to the Busselton Jetty Underwater Observatory for an amazing view of the colourful world beneath the water.

Spanning six distinct wine regions including the renowned Margaret River Wine Region, which produces more than 25 percent of Australia's premium wine, the South West is also home to a variety of fresh produce. Enjoy fresh farmed marron and trout, venison, chocolates, cheeses, cherries, boutique beers and crisp ciders as well as Manjimup's indulgent black truffle, which is exported around the world. The South West celebrates its food and wine offerings with a variety of events including Margaret River Gourmet Escape, Taste Great Southern and Truffle Kerfuffle.

Experience Aboriginal customs, hear Dreamtime stories and learn about the history of the Noongar people - the first inhabitants of WA's South West – at the Wardan Aboriginal Centre in Yallingup, the Kodja Place in Kojonup and at Ngilgi Cave in Yallingup, one of a series of caves hidden along the Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park. The South West is also home to a range of exceptional artistic talents – including painters and sculptors, furniture makers, jewellery designers and hand-blown glass works.

Get a bird's eye view of towering tingle trees on the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk between Denmark and Walpole. Suspended 40 metres above the forest floor, the walk is the first of its kind in the world. The South West is also home to giant jarrah, karri, marri and tuart trees.

Adventure-seekers will find out-of-this-world challenges, from the 1,000 kilometre Bibbulmun Track and the incredibly diverse Cape to Cape Track, to the Munda Biddi Bike Trail – fast becoming a world-class nature-based off-road cycling experience. There's also unique and stunning cave experiences, with more than 150

caves along the spine of the Leeuwin Naturaliste Ridge – Ngilgi, Mammoth, Lake and Jewel Caves are the key ones for visitors to explore.

Golden Outback

Golden Outback is where you'll find historic townships, scenes of spectacular desert wilderness, outback characters, gold rush history, and the beaches of the Southern Ocean.

Visit the largest outdoor gallery in the world at Lake Ballard, Menzies. Created by world famous sculptor Antony Gormley and located on the salt based Lake Ballard - the 51 life-sized steel statues were inspired by the people of Menzies and form the Inside Australia exhibition, an initiative of the Perth International Arts Festival.

Explore the unexpected and wonderful - from the touching tribute to man's best friend at the Corrigin Dog Cemetery, to the country quirkiness of the Tin Horse highway, to the world's longest golf course, the 1,365 kilometre Nullarbor Links.

Golden Quest Discovery Trail. Travelling 965 kilometres from Coolgardie to Laverton, the trail is home to legendary country pubs, the fascinating Gwalia ghost town and the former home of the 31st US President Herbert Hoover, and one of the world's biggest open-cut mines - the Superpit in Kalgoorlie – that has harvested more than 50 million ounces of gold.

See Australia's whitest beach, Lucky Bay, at Cape Le Grand National Park. With its sweeping stretches of white sand, Cape Le Grand National Park in Esperance is a place so relaxed even the kangaroo's sunbake on the beach. Follow the coastal walk trails or take a gentle stroll along the beach and feel the squeaky-clean sand between your toes. Camp outside under a blanket of stars, and learn more about the area with an Indigenous guide.

Walk among the wildflowers and ride an outback wave. Wave Rock near the Wheatbelt town of Hyden is one of Australia's most famous rock formations. This 110 metre long multi-coloured granite cliff is shaped remarkably like a huge wave about to crash into the bush. In Spring, you'll be surrounded by WA wildflowers in full bloom. To see beautiful blankets of everlastings head north to the Gascoyne Murchison area.

Coral Coast

Coral Coast is located north of Perth is home to awesome marine life, endless white sandy beaches and the warm, turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean. Snorkel World-Heritage listed Ningaloo Reef. If you're visiting Exmouth, Coral Bay or the ocean-side stations north of Carnarvon, this is an absolute must do. Ningaloo Reef is regarded as one of the last great ocean paradises on Earth, and you can access this watery wonderland by simply stepping off the beach and into the sea.

Swim with the ocean's gentle giant – the Whale Shark. Join a Whale Shark tour from Exmouth or Coral Bay and experience the ultimate wildlife encounter – swimming with the largest fish in world. Whale Sharks visit Ningaloo Reef from mid-March to the end of July. The region is also known for majestic Manta Rays and giant Sea Turtles.

Visit the Shark Bay World-Heritage area and see the friendly dolphins of Monkey Mia. Renowned as one of the most reliable places in the world for dolphin interaction - these friendly wild bottlenose dolphins have been swimming to Monkey Mia's shores to interact with humans for more than 40 years. While in the region also spot turtles and dugongs, admire the Hamelin Pool stromatolites (one of the oldest and largest living fossils in the world) and fish, snorkel and dive.

The wildflower trails of Australia's Coral Coast lead you through some of WA's most breathtaking wildflower country. Blooms can be found all year round, but displays are at their best between July and November when inland areas are blanketed in the brilliant colours of thousands of varieties.

See the extraordinary ancient rock formations that make up the Pinnacles. Located near the coastal town of Cervantes, a little over two hours north of Perth along the Indian Ocean Drive, the Pinnacles are regarded as one of Australia's most unique landscapes. These incredible limestone spiers rise eerily out of the sand, some several metres tall. You can get up close to the Pinnacles on a scenic drive and walk trail that includes an amazing lookout over the Nambung National Park.

North West

Australia's North West is one of the world's last true wilderness areas, a billion years in the making. It's home to the ancient gorges of Karijini National Park and the world's only Staircase to the Moon and Horizontal Waterfalls. It's also where you'll find one of the best kept secrets on Earth – the Bungle Bungle Range in World-Heritage listed Purnululu National Park. Take a ride on a camel train along the beautiful sands of Cable Beach, Broome. What better way to take in the surrounds – sun-kissed white sands meet turquoise waters, one extraordinary step at a time. Take a late afternoon tour and bask in the orange glow of a famous Broome sunset.

Learn about Aboriginal culture. Dotted along the Dampier Peninsula north of Broome in the west Kimberley are several Aboriginal tourism experiences. Lombadina Aboriginal Corporation near Cape Leveque allows guests to overnight and share in an Indigenous lifestyle. Award winning Kooljaman at Cape Leveque also offers a

unique wilderness style camp on the tip of the Dampier Peninsula, and a variety of tours and activities run by the local Aboriginal people.

Escape to one of WA's remote luxury resorts. Faraway Bay is a place so remote you won't even find it on a map, Kimberley Coastal Camp is accessible only by helicopter, El Questro Homestead is cantilevered atop Chamberlain Gorge in the east Kimberley, while the new Berkeley River Lodge can only be accessed by boat or sea plane.

Explore Karijini National Park. Located in the Pilbara, this landscape is millions of years old, and will wow all who visit. Stay at Karijini Eco Retreat - unique high end tented accommodation that has Advanced Eco Tourism Certification and AAA Tourism Green Stars.

Explore the Kimberley by air, road or ocean. If you're short on time, the Kimberley Aerial Highway links some of the Kimberley's most spectacular hot spots by air – including Lake Argyle and the Bungle Bungle Range in World-Heritage listed Purnululu National Park, the world's only Horizontal Waterfalls at Talbot Bay and outback stations such as El Questro Wilderness Park and Home Valley Station. Get up close and personal on a self - drive or 4WD tour of the Kimberley, or luxuriate on a Kimberley coastal cruise.

The wildflower trails of Australia's Coral Coast lead you through some of WA's most breathtaking wildflower country. Blooms can be found all year round, but displays are at their best between July and November when inland areas are blanketed in the brilliant colours of thousands of varieties.

See the extraordinary ancient rock formations that make up the Pinnacles. Located near the coastal town of Cervantes, a little over two hours north of Perth along the Indian Ocean Drive, the Pinnacles are regarded as one of Australia's most unique landscapes. These incredible limestone spiers rise eerily out of the sand, some several metres tall. You can get up close to the Pinnacles on a scenic drive and walk trail that includes an amazing lookout over the Nambung National Park.

8) Tasmania

Tasmania is a place of wild and beautiful landscapes, friendly, helpful people with a relaxed island lifestyle, wonderful wine and food and a haunting history evoked by spectacular convict-era ruins. It's also Australia's smallest state and the most geographically diverse with over 40 per cent of Tasmania reserved as national park and world heritage area. So no matter where you go in Tasmania, whether you spend time in one location or drive around the island, we know you'll be delighted by what you'll find and surprised at how much bigger Tasmania really is on the inside.

Hobart

Hobart, Tasmania's capital city, is located on the Derwent River in Tasmania's south and is within a 90-minute drive of some of Tasmania's most visited attractions, making it the perfect base for exploring southern Tasmania.

South of Hobart are the clear waters and stunning coastline of Bruny Island, the fertile soils of the Huon valley, the picturesque beauty of the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and the rugged Hartz Mountains National Park.

East of Hobart are the wineries of the Coal River Valley and the Tasman National Park with its spectacular coastline and historic convict sites.

East Coast

Tasmania's East Coast, with its natural beauty, spectacular landscapes and long beautiful beaches, offers a completely different Australian coastal experience. Here you'll discover the beaches of the beautiful Bay of Fires, one of Lonely Planet's top 10 regions in the world, along with historic townships, fresh seafood and friendly locals.

Five national parks spread along the coast including the stunning Freycinet National Park with its pink granite mountains, pure white beaches and crystal clear sea.

The two largest towns on the East Coast are Bicheno and St Helens - both busy fishing ports, so expect some of the freshest seafood around. There's also some of the best game fishing in Australia.

And for those interested in diving, there are sheer rock walls, deep fissures, caves, sponges and sea whips, not to mention world-famous kelp forests.

Inland from the coast you'll find temperate rainforests, fresh grown produce and the rich heritage of the boom days of tin mining as well as fruits and berries from orchards and gardens and full-flavoured beef and lamb raised on seaside pastures. With this range of activities and adventures to choose from, it's no wonder the East Coast attracts visitors from around the world.

North West

Full of colour and flavour, Tasmania's North West is the gateway to some of Tasmania's most beautiful natural places. Exploring the North West you'll find classic coastal drives, food trails, stunning national parks and beautiful nature reserves.

Tasmania's North West is a great place for touring and offers spectacular views at every turn, from Mt Roland near Devonport, Table Cape near Wynyard and the famous 'Nut' at Stanley. And some of Tasmania's prettiest cities and towns sit right on the water's edge on the scenic North West coast, each with their own unique attractions and relaxed seaside atmosphere.

There's an ongoing tradition of agriculture in here that's evident in the rich red soils and patchwork fields found throughout the countryside. The ideal growing conditions have inspired growers and makers committed to producing the very best in fresh crisp vegetables, dairy products, wines, whiskey and sweet treats for the hungry traveller – the ultimate paddock to plate experience.

There's a wealth of stories here too, with some great museums and significant Aboriginal heritage sites, while the region's creative spirit is showcased in the many art galleries, public artworks, artisan shops and markets found along the North West coast.

Tasmania's North West is also home to Cradle Mountain, one of Tasmania's most visited icons, offering amazing nature experiences, including forest adventures, great walks - easy and hard - and some of the best scenery in the world.

Whichever way you explore the region, there's no shortage of great places to stay, eat and enjoy in Tasmania's North West.

King Island

King Island lies off the north-west coast of Tasmania, surrounded by rugged coastline and full of fresh seafood, famously good produce and some of the cleanest air in the world.

This is a destination for foodies who want to get close to the source and travel far from the rest of the world.

Uncover the island's stories at the museum and cultural centre in the town of Currie or take a guided or DIY trail of the island's produce, culture, history, flora and fauna.

It's quiet and easy going here, but there's something interesting at every turn – from a lighthouse and offshore shipwrecks to the island's great nature walks and unique wildlife, including the elusive platypus and rare orange-bellied parrots.

Surf's up for serious board riders and kite surfers and divers, with plenty of other ways to work up an appetite before sampling the island's famous cheese and dairy products, seafood, beef, honey and fruit and veggies at a farm gate or eatery.

Catch dinner on a charter boat or pick up a picnic hamper for an alfresco feast, King Island-style. Food is king here, and the island's annual Long Table Festival puts the island's fresh produce front and centre.

King Island is 80 kilometres north-west of mainland Tasmania, accessible by air from Melbourne, Launceston and Burnie–Wynyard.

Launceston and North

Tasmania's North is a feast of historic streetscapes and heritage estates, rich farmland, premier cool-climate wines, fresh produce and a haven for designers and craft makers.

Launceston, in Tasmania's North, is Tasmania's second largest city and a vibrant hub for food and wine, culture and nature. It's also the gateway to the Tamar Valley.

Out of Launceston, the surrounding green fields and country lanes are lined with 150 year old hawthorn, poplar and elm trees, while in the rich farmland of the Tamar Valley can be found lavender plantations, vineyards, strawberry farms and orchards.

The Tamar Valley is also Tasmania's premier wine-growing region and a place where premium cool-climate wines, outstanding fresh produce and award winning restaurants go hand in hand. The cellar doors, vineyard restaurants and farmers' markets of Launceston and the north offer some of the best gourmet experiences in Australia.

This idyllic setting will satisfy other interests too, from those of history enthusiasts to nature lovers.

The nearby towns of Evandale and Longford, with their grand old estates of Woolmers, Brickendon, Panshangar and Clarendon, offer visitors the chance to enjoy the architecture and community spirit of 19th century English villages made relevant for today.

Many are now luxury retreats that offer a uniquely Tasmanian experience, combining old world elegance with a relaxed, new world style.

And for those interested in wildlife, nearby Narawntapu National Park provides many opportunities to see Australia's unique animals.

West Coast

On Tasmania's West Coast you'll find world famous wilderness rich in convict heritage, stunning national parks and historic mining towns.

Gateway to Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area, its rugged mountains, ancient rain forests and heath make the west one of Australia's last true wilderness frontiers. Yet, despite its remoteness, its easy and safe to visit and travellers can still enjoy the best of Tasmania's quality accommodation and fine dining.

Tasmania's west is often remembered for the conflict between forestry workers and environmentalists to save the flooding of Lake Pedder, and once you visit you'll get an idea of what the protest was all about.

The largest coastal town is Strahan, situated on Macquarie Harbour and close to Sarah Island - one of the harshest penal colony settlements in Australia.

The inland population centres of Queenstown and the smaller towns of Zeehan, Tullah and Rosebery are rich in mining history and are all within a short distance of magnificent lakes, rivers, rainforests, giant sand dunes and historic sites.

There are so many ways to experience Tasmania's west, from wild forest adventures to luxury cruises on crystal clear waterways or simply by car.

Visitors can experience its wonders by driving for around 60 km along the Lyell Highway between Derwent Bridge and Lake Burbury. Bordering the highway are a series of stunning short walks through rainforest to Donaghy's Lookout, the Franklin River Nature Trail and the Nelson Falls Nature Trail - all highly recommended.

Flinders Island

Flinders Island is located off mainland Tasmania's north-east coast and offers the ultimate escape with peace and quiet, natural beauty and plenty of local attractions.

Flinders is the largest of the Furneaux group of 52 islands and offers a range of great experiences - from walking beautiful, long deserted beaches and lazy scenic drives to fishing, golfing, diving and even fossicking for 'Killiecrankie diamonds'.

Beyond the green rolling hills of farmland, there's also a world of natural wonders to explore, from the pristine coastline to the rugged pink and grey granite mountain ranges of the Strzelecki National Park, not to mention plants and animals found nowhere else on earth.

Visitors to the island can camp in the wilderness, relax in luxury at a seaside resort or stay at a local farm or friendly Bed and Breakfast.

There's plenty of good quality produce to enjoy with locally grown meats, freshly caught seafood, fresh fruits and vegetables and wines, as well as art and craft made from locally-sourced materials.

Flinders Island is a special place and offers a refreshing break from the real world.

Regular flights to Flinders Island leave from Launceston, Tasmania or Essendon, Victoria. The island can also be reached by ferry from Bridport in Tasmania and Port Welshpool in Victoria.