

BIG FIVE[®]

TOURS & EXPEDITIONS

Enriching Lives Through Distinctive Journeys

Destination Information Guide

Australia



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Welcome to the World of Big Five!

The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.

Big Five Tours & Expeditions is pleased to welcome you on this exciting adventure. We take great care to insure that your travel dreams and expectations are well met. Our distinctive journeys allow you to experience the finest aspects each destination has to offer. We also aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the places you'll visit and the people you'll meet.



Sydney, New South Wales Elevation: 20 feet Latitude: 33 56S Longitude: 151 10E
Average Temperature Years on Record: 53

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
°F	64	72	73	70	65	60	55	53	55	59	64	67	71

Average High Temperature Years on Record: 53

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
°F	72	79	79	77	73	68	63	62	64	68	72	75	78

Average Low Temperature Years on Record: 53

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
°F	55	65	66	63	57	51	47	44	46	50	55	59	63

Darwin, Northern Territory Elevation: 102 feet Latitude: 12 26S Longitude: 130 53E

Average Temperature Years on Record: 50

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	82	83	83	83	81	78	77	79	82	84	85	84

Average High Temperature Years on Record: 50

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	89	89	88	89	91	89	87	87	88	90	91	91

Average Low Temperature Years on Record: 50

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	74	77	76	76	75	72	68	67	69	74	77	77

WEATHER

The tropical north (Far North Queensland, the Top End and the Kimberley) has two distinct seasons. The 'green' season runs from Nov to April with the heaviest rainfalls usually in Jan–Mar. Temperatures range 24–33°C/75–91 F° and may be accompanied by high humidity. It is a spectacular time to see the region's rainforests and waterfalls. The 'dry' season (May to Oct) is characterized by clear blue skies and warm sunshine, averaging between 16–26°C/61–79 F°, and is perhaps the most comfortable time to enjoy the tropics. Australia's southern states largely enjoy a temperate, Mediterranean-style, climate. Warm summers and cool winters can usually be enjoyed without extremes. The further south you travel, the more distinct the four seasons become, with the country's most southern reaches and highlands experiencing frosts and winter snow falls. Summers by the beach in Sydney, clear blue skies over Kakadu in the Australian winter months Spring wildflowers in Western Australia or the Autumn colors around Canberra – Australia's geographical and climatic diversity make any time a good time to visit. Dec to Feb is the ideal time to join in the Australians' celebration of summer. It is also a popular holiday season with the locals, particularly for travel along the east coast. However, spring, Sept to Nov, and autumn, Mar to May, are perhaps the best times to visit when combining travel to both the Northern and Southern parts of the country. The bureau of meteorology, www.bom.gov.au, provides information on current weather conditions and general climate information specific to each part of the country. **NOTE:** Be sure to protect yourself from the Australian sun with a hat, shirt and good sunscreen.

TIME ZONES

Australia has three time zones:

Eastern Standard Time GMT + 10 NSW, ACT, Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania

Central Time GMT + 9.5 Northern Territory and South Australia

Western Time GMT + 8 Western Australia

Daylight savings (Summer Time) is observed by most Australian states. NSW, ACT, Victoria and South Australia wind their clocks forward one hour from the end of October (Tasmania from early October, Western Australia from early December), until the end of March. Queensland and the Northern Territory do not observe daylight saving. For the current time in various Australian centers visit www.timeanddate.com/worldclock. US

visitors should also be aware that Australians write the date

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passports: For international travel, a passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing at least 3 blank pages are necessary.

Visas: All visa applications must be made before arriving in Australia. Short stay holiday visas (up to 3 months) can be arranged electronically. Check www.eta.immi.gov.au for further details.

U.S. residents: Big Five has appointed Trivisa to process required visas. You will find the necessary forms from Trivisa's website at: www.trivisa.com. Please use account code JP1551, and follow directions.

Canadian residents: please contact the nearest consulate.

Important: Even if you do not need a visa prior to departure, please check your passport well in advance of departure to insure:

1) It is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.

2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa/entry stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

Upon arrival, proceed through immigration and baggage claims and customs. Big Five personnel or their representatives will assist you with your baggage, escort you to your hotel, and assist with check-in.

CUSTOMS INTO AUSTRALIA

The following items may be imported into Australia by persons over 18 years of age without incurring customs duty: 250 cigarettes or 250g of tobacco or cigars; 2.25l of any alcoholic liquor; articles for personal hygiene and clothing, not including perfume or fur apparel; other goods to a value of A\$900 (A\$450 if under 18).

Note: The Australian government has introduced limits on the amount of liquids, aerosols and gels that can be taken through the screening point for people flying to and from Australia. You may carry duty-free liquid, aerosol and gel purchases on board if they are delivered to the departure gate in a sealed bag with proof of purchase and collected after you have proceeded through security screening. **Check with your airline prior to travel.**

Prohibited Imports: There are very strict regulations against the import of non-prescribed drugs, weapons, firearms, wildlife, domestic animals and foodstuffs (including meat, poultry and dairy; plants or parts of plants [including fruit, nuts and seeds]; animal products [including wool, skins and eggs] and any equipment used with domestic animals) and other potential sources of disease and pestilence (such as vaccines or viruses). There are severe penalties for drug trafficking. For further details on customs regulations, contact the Australian Customs Service (website: www.customs.gov.au). Customs information booklets can be obtained from the Australian High Commission or Embassy.

US CUSTOMS

Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. There are limits on some items. Regulations frequently change, however, so check with your nearest customs office for a list of limited and exempt items, or write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044. Or, visit web site www.customs.ustreas.gov.

CANADA CUSTOMS

Returning to Canada, declare all of goods acquired while outside Canada, such as purchases, gifts, prizes or awards that you are bringing with you or are having shipped to you. Include goods that are still in your possession that you bought at a Canadian or foreign duty-free shop. For more information, within Canada call the Border Information Service at 1-800-461-9999, or visit CBSA Web site at www.cbsa.gc.ca.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Anyone traveling internationally should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date. Also, discuss your general fitness level for participating in the activities related to your specific tour (i.e. snorkeling, hiking, nature walks, etc.). However, in highly developed areas of Australia, you should observe health precautions similar to those that would apply while traveling in the United States.

Yellow Fever: No health certificates or vaccinations are required for entry into Australia. Yellow fever inoculation is required if one of the following applies:

- If you are coming from any area other than the United States, Europe, or Canada.
- Vaccinations are only required for people who have traveled through yellow fever declared countries six days prior to their arrival in Australia.

Please note: If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage.

Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel. Please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. Or, visit the CDC Internet home page at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

CLOTHING

*For general clothing information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials. See pre-departure information for general packing check list.*

Lightweight cottons and linens in summer. Warmer medium-weight clothing for mountain areas. Waterproofing is advisable from March to June. In the tropics, lightweight casual clothing is suitable at all venues, all year round. In the southern temperate regions layers are the best solution for warm days and cool nights, and smart casual clothing is the norm almost everywhere. Warm clothing is recommended for visiting the southern States between May and September. **“Must Packs” include:** comfortable walking shoes, bathing swim suits, wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, high protection factor sunscreen, a cardigan or sweater. Even the “Red Centre” can become quite cool at night.

LUGGAGE

*For general baggage information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials.*

Please note, that there may be luggage restrictions on some regional flights (eg: Cairns to Lizard Island). Visitors are therefore advised to bring a small bag to be able to transport some of their luggage for this part of their journey. Storage facilities are usually available for the excess luggage at departing airports. Also, in this security conscious era, airline luggage

restrictions *may change without notice*. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations. Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions may apply for charter flights. This will vary with destination and type of planes used. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final itinerary.

MONEY

Currency: Australian Dollar (AUD; symbol A\$) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of A\$100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of A\$2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10 and 5 cents.

Currency Exchange: Exchange facilities are available for all incoming and outgoing flights at all international airports in Australia. International-class hotels will exchange major currencies for guests. It is recommended that visitors change money at the airport or at city banks.

Credit / Debit Cards and ATMs: Major credit cards are accepted. Use may be restricted in small towns and outback areas. PIN. Visa and Mastercard are accepted almost everywhere. Please note, however, that Diners Club and American Express are not as widely accepted. Also, a minimum purchase may be required to use your credit card in some shops.

Travelers Checks: Widely accepted in major currencies at banks or large hotels. However, some banks may charge a fee for cashing travelers' checks. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, take travelers check in a major currency.

LANGUAGE

The official language is English. Many other languages are retained by minorities, including Italian, German, Greek, Vietnamese, Chinese dialects And Aboriginal languages. Telephones: The country dialing code for Australia is +61. The outgoing international code is 0011. Call 1223 or 1234 for directory assistance. There are 5 main mobile (cell) phone operators in Australia supporting a range of technologies, including GSM, CDMA and UMTS; which enables many overseas mobiles to operate in Australia. Visitors should check with their local provider and activate international roaming before leaving home. Alternatively, mobile phones with a local SIM can be hired by the day at most major Australian airports; and prepaid SIM cards are also available for purchase (your handset may need to be

'unlocked' by your local service provider to allow this to work). Coverage is generally good around the major population centers however some remote outback locations and islands do not have mobile coverage.

ELECTRICITY

220/240 volts AC, 50Hz. Three-pin plugs are in use however, sockets are different from those found in most countries and an adaptor socket may be needed. Outlets for 110 volts for small appliances are found in most hotels.

FOOD & DRINK

Standards of hygiene in food and water preparation are very high. Generally speaking, use the same precautions in Australia that you would at home. Care should be taken, however, when sampling 'bush tucker' in outback areas as some insects and fauna are highly poisonous unless properly cooked. Milk is pasteurized and meat and vegetables are considered safe to eat. Any change in routine can lead to stomach troubles. Food and waterborne diseases can be caused by viruses, bacteria, or parasites, which are found throughout Australia and the South Pacific and can contaminate food or water.

Australian food and drink are a large part of the visitor experience, whether it is fresh seafood on the barbeque, a schooner of cold beer at an outback pub, fine dining overlooking Sydney Harbour or a glass of chardonnay at the cellar door. Thanks to a multicultural population of food lovers, an abundance of fresh ingredients from both the land and the sea, and a new generation of internationally acclaimed and highly innovative chefs, Australia has no shortage of dining options to tantalize any visitor's taste buds.

- Seafood: In addition to all of the perennial favorites, try Barramundi (freshwater fish), Balmain and Moreton Bay Bugs (small crustaceans), Yabbies (freshwater lobsters), Pacific Oysters and Tasmanian Salmon.

- Meat: Australian beef and lamb have an excellent reputation and are exported around the globe. For the more adventurous, there is also kangaroo, emu and crocodile to sample.

- Countless Australian wines of all varieties and numerous mainstream and boutique beers to quench the thirst.

Most special dietary requirements can be widely catered for. Please advise us in advance of any specific dietary requirements so that we may inform the appropriate accommodation and tour operators

accordingly.

- The major vineyards (wineries) are outside Perth, Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Canberra and Adelaide. The largest single wine-growing region is in the Barossa Valley, South Australia,

Some useful tips and terminology before heading out to dine:

- Schooners, Pots, Pints and Middies – all refer to the bewildering variety of beer glass sizes which vary from state to state. Furthermore, a “stubby” refers to a 375ml bottle of beer.
- BYO – Many restaurants are “BYO” which means you can ‘bring your own’ bottled wine to drink with the meal.
- The legal drinking age in Australia is 18 years.

Check out www.bestrestaurants.com.au for a good selection of restaurants in each of Australia’s main centers. **National specialties Include:** Sydney rock oysters, Barramundi (freshwater fish), Tiger prawns, Macadamia nuts, and Yabbies (small freshwater lobsters). Australian wines are well known. The major vineyards (wineries) are outside Perth, Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Canberra and Adelaide. The largest single wine-growing region is in the Barossa Valley, South Australia, two hours’ drive from Adelaide, where high-quality red and white wines are produced. For further information, visit www.australianwineandbeer.com.

Note: If you have food allergies or special / restricted dietary requests, please notify your travel agent or our office in advance, so that we may try to comply with your needs. Also, please advise your travel agent or our office if you have any mobility restrictions, so that we may inform our representatives accordingly. They will always strive to accommodate you to the best of their ability.

TIPPING

Tipping should be done at your discretion and as a reward for good or exceptional service.

For general tipping guidelines please refer to:

www.cntraveler.com/travel-tips/travel-etiquette/2008/12/Etiquette-101-Tipping-Guide

SHOPPING

Shops in most major centers are open 7 days a week: 9.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday (with late opening one night a week – usually Thursday or Friday) and 10am to 4pm on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays.

Some supermarkets and petrol stations are open 24/7. Almost all shops close on Good Friday, Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day. Wondering what to buy as a memento of your stay in Australia?

- Australian opals in all different colors, Broome pearls and Argyle diamonds all make stunning souvenirs.
- Wear a slice of Australia with contemporary designs by Collette Dinnigan, Akira Isogawa or Sass and Bide or more authentic Australian items from RM Williams, Drizabone or Akubra.
- Let your taste buds reminisce with some local wines, Haigh’s fine chocolates or the quintessential jar of Vegemite.
- Original Aboriginal artwork.

Australia’s many colorful local markets are also a great place to pick up a unique souvenir, often with the opportunity of ‘meeting the maker’. Shoppers should be aware that Australian clothing and shoe sizes are different than those in U.S. and European sizes. Check www.onlineconversion.com for a guide to local sizes. All goods and services are subject to a 10% Goods and Services Tax (GST) which is included in the displayed price. However international visitors may be entitled to a refund under the Tourist Refund Scheme. The refund applies to goods with a total value of \$AUD300 or more in one transaction (substantiated by a tax invoice) that travelers carry with them as hand luggage when leaving the country. The refund can be processed by credit card, check or EFT to Australian bank accounts at Tourist Refund Scheme booths after passport control on departure. Check www.customs.gov.au for further details. **Always insure that your purchases will be allowed back into the U.S. Information is available at the U.S. Customs & Immigration website: www.customs.ustreas.gov.**

OVERVIEW OF AUSTRALIA

Australia is bounded by the Arafura Sea and Timor Seas to the north, the Coral and Tasman Seas of the South Pacific to the east, the Southern Ocean to the south, and the Indian Ocean to the west. Its coastline covers 22,814 miles. Most of the population has settled along the eastern and south-eastern coastal strip. Australia is the smallest continent (or the largest island) in the world. About 40 per cent of the continent is within the tropics and Australia is almost the same size as the mainland of the United States of America. The terrain is extremely varied, ranging from tortured red desert to lush green rainforest. Australia's beaches and surfing are world renowned, while the country is also rich in reminders of its mysterious past. These range from prehistoric Aboriginal art to Victorian colonial architecture. The landscape consists mainly of a low plateau mottled with lakes and rivers and skirted with coastal mountain ranges, highest in the east with the Great Dividing Range. There are rainforests in the far northeast (Cape York Peninsula). The southeast is a huge fertile plain. Further to the north lies the enormous Great Barrier Reef, a 2000km (1200 mile) strip of coral that covers a total area of 345,000 sq km. Although Australia is the driest land on Earth, it nevertheless has enormous snowfields the size of Switzerland. There are vast mineral deposits.

AUSTRALIA'S STATES

Queensland: With regions such as the Gold Coast and Whitsundays, it is little wonder that Queensland brings to mind lazy days on sunny beaches. It's true, the perfect climate and seaside towns show relaxed Australian culture at its best. On Queensland, there are high numbers of jellyfish between November and May, a time referred to as Stinger Season. It is recommended that a full-body Lycia wet/stinger suit (or equivalent) be worn to provide a good measure of protection against marine stings.

SUGGESTED READING LIST

Many comprehensive and readily available guides produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, etc.. Longitude Books at <http://www.longitudebooks.com> has an extensive collection of books, searchable by country.

New South Wales: Australia's oldest state is packed full of amazing attractions, places of spectacular natural beauty, unique history and a bunch of fun activities for all to enjoy.

Australian Capital Territory: This is home to the nation's capital, Canberra, sometimes referred to as the bush capital because pockets of bushland reserve extend almost to the city center and over half of the Australian Capital Territory is classified national park. Its full name is a bit of a mouthful so the state is known simply as the ACT. You could easily miss it on the map as it's far smaller than the state of New South Wales that completely surrounds it.

Victoria: For a small state, Victoria has some of the best sightseeing and most fascinating places in the country. From the heady Gold Rush days to the dramatic scenery, there are surprises around every bend.

Tasmania: Tucked away at the far south of the country and across the untamed waters of Bass Strait, lies Tasmania, a place rich with heritage and spectacular natural history.

South Australia: Wine connoisseurs won't be disappointed with regions such as the Barossa, Clare Valley and The Limestone Coast. South Australia has a large and varied selection of acclaimed wineries.

Western Australia: From the vast open plains of the Nullarbor to the marine wonderland of Ningaloo Reef, this state provides the best of both worlds.

Northern Territory: A land of contrasts, the Northern Territory is rich with striking scenery. From the lush rainforests of Kakadu and Katherine to the arid red plains of the Red Centre in Alice Springs and the great rock, Uluru, the land is full of surprises. Australia's main tourist attractions are Sydney, the Great Barrier Reef, the Gold Coast of Queensland and Uluru (Ayers Rock), in the rugged outback of the Northern Territory.

COMMONWEALTH OF THIEVES: THE IMPROBABLE BIRTH OF AUSTRALIA

by **Thomas Keneally**

At the center of *A Commonwealth of Thieves*

is Arthur Phillips, an ambitious captain in the Royal Navy assigned the formidable task of organizing the expedition to Australia and establishing a colony comprised mainly of unskilled and malcontent criminals and petty thieves. Using Phillips's personal journals, along with other historical documents, Keneally re-creates the grueling overseas voyage, a hellish journey that claimed the lives of many convicts. As governor of the colony, Phillips took on the challenges of dealing with unruly convicts, disgruntled officers, a bewildered, sometimes hostile native population, as well as such serious matters as food shortages and disease. In the end Phillips emerges as a governor driven by a yearning for recognition and advancement, yet possessed of a social conscience rare for his time. Keneally's captivating portraits of Aborigines who both aided and opposed Phillips and of various settlers—including convicts determined to overcome their pasts and begin anew—add depth and color to his incisive, engaging narrative on a watershed period in history.

AUSTRALIA: THE NEW FRONTIER

by **Gianni Guadalupi (Introduction), Gianni Guadalupi (Introduction), Alessandra Mattanza**

Australia is a fantastic kaleidoscope of light and color that blend together to create a singular patchwork of landscapes, people, images, and culture. Brimming with colorful photographs, this book takes readers on a splendid adventure through this remarkable country. Following a concise history tracing Australia's roots, it delves into the true spirit of the country: its magnificent and untamed natural environment. Australia is depicted in all its raw beauty: the boundless expanses of the Outback, the striking colors of its rock formations, and the sands of its immense deserts. The Great Barrier Reef, atolls, and islands surrounded by sapphire-colored ocean provide a glorious contrast to the stark inland landscapes, as do photographs of deep green forests and tropical vegetation. Tasmania, at the southernmost tip of Australia, is portrayed as an extraordinary microcosm of water, stone, and lush plant life. Readers are treated to exceptional photographs of the Aborigines, the island's native inhabitants, who still believe in magic, dreams, and legends. The book documents the arrival and impact of different ethnic groups who have immigrated to Australia over the years and who have established diverse lifestyles that range from the heroism of flying doctors to the beach culture of the surf crowd. A tour of Australia's fascinating cities' stunning Sydney, aristocratic Melbourne, cultured

Adelaide, and youthful Brisbane, among others demonstrates each city's distinct appeal and personality.

ROAD FROM COORAIN

by **Jill Ker Conway, Jill Ker Conway**

She was seven before she ever saw another girl child. At eight, still too small to mount her horse unaided, she was galloping miles, alone, across Coorain, her parents' thirty thousand windswept, drought-haunted acres in the Australian outback, doing a "man's job" of helping herd the sheep because World War II had taken away the able-bodied men.

DARKEST HOUR: THE TRUE STORY OF LARK FORCE AT RABAU – AUSTRALIA'S WORST MILITARY DISASTER OF WORLD WAR II

by **Bruce Gamble**

January 23, 1942, New Britain. It was 2:30 a.m., the darkest hour of the day and, for the defenders of this Southwest Pacific island, soon to be the war's darkest hour. Fifteen hundred men and six nurses, Lark Force, had been deployed to New Britain to fortify and defend Rabaul, capital of Australia's mandated territories. Once they'd completed their work on the strategic port and its two airfields, the group—mostly volunteers from Victoria—had settled into the routine of garrison duties, confident of being relieved within a year. But the Japanese had other ideas. Rabaul was the linchpin of their campaign to conquer the Southwest Pacific and in the early hours of January 23 their invasion told in *The Darkest Hour*, a gut-wrenching account of courage and sacrifice, folly and disaster, as seen through the eyes of the few who survived. Bruce Sheep One follows key individuals—soldiers and nurse among them—through their experiences in Lark Force.

DECEMBER BOYS

by **Michael Noonan**

The December Boys, by Michael Noonan, has long been acknowledged as an Australian classic. First published in 1963 and commended for the Miles Franklin Award, it remains one of Australia's most loved coming-of-age stories, redolent with change, friendship, and love. When a group of close friends leaves the dusty outback orphanage where they've grown up for a summer holiday together at the coast, their future is full of possibilities. But the chance that one of them, just one, might gain a real family to live with calls everything they thought they knew about themselves and each other into question.