

**Sydney is a fast-paced multicultural city full of unique sun-soaked attractions and a diverse combination of refined culture and glitzy nightlife. With a population of approximately 4.28 million people, Sydney is located around magnificent Port Jackson and the sparkling shores of Sydney Harbour, and is both the oldest city in Australia and the state capital of New South Wales. The metropolitan area of Sydney is surrounded by national parks, and contains many gorgeous bays, rivers and inlets. With rugged sandstone headlands, a busy and beautiful harbour, excellent shopping, great restaurants, sensational beaches, and boasting a world famous bridge and Opera House, Sydney is the ultimate big city to see in Australia.**

Most international visitors to Australia either arrive or depart from Sydney Airport. There is a wide variety of accommodation available in Sydney, from hotels, motels, to more budget style backpacker hostels. Keep in mind that during the Christmas/New Year/ Australia Day period all types of accommodation become scarce. We advise booking accommodation at these times very early (approximately 6 months ahead) to avoid disappointment!

## Sights & Attractions

Sydney boasts some fantastic attractions, from the historic Rocks neighborhood, Sydney Cove, the ferries of Circular Quay, the iconic Opera House, Sydney Harbour Bridge, Bondi Beach, lovely Darling Harbour, Manly Beach, to gaudy Kings Cross. Get your culture fix with a visit to the Royal Botanic Gardens or the Art Gallery of New South Wales or alternatively head for a shopping spree along Oxford Street, Paddington, and Queen Street in Woollahra.

Taking a ferry from Circular Quay or Darling Harbour to destinations such as Manly will provide you with awesome views of the Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. For truly spectacular views of the city and also the harbour join a 'Bridgeclimb' tour on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. If you seek colourful nightlife then you can't go past Kings Cross.

Sydney is a summer city and comes alive with the warm weather. The people of Sydney have a beach/river/harbour lifestyle. Take a stroll, relax on golden sand under the sun, or swim at famous Bondi Beach. If you want to bodysurf some waves then visit Bondi, Tamarama or Bronte beaches on the south shore, and just about any of the beaches from Manly to Palm Beach on the north shore.

For those visitors who love bushwalking there are some great hiking paths in the Royal National, Ku-ring-gai Chase and Sydney Harbour national parks. The 8 kilometre Manly Scenic Walkway follows the harbour from the north shore beachside suburb to Spit Bridge on Middle Harbour. Another magnificent walk passes along the coastal cliffs from Bronte to Bondi Beach.

## Arts/Culture/Festivals

Sydney's most popular nightspots (bars, nightclubs and restaurants)

include famous Kings Cross, Oxford Street, Star City Casino, elegant Darling Harbour, Circular Quay and The Rocks. There are many more restaurants, bars, and nightclubs in inner city areas such as Newtown, Balmain and Leichhardt or scattered throughout the city in areas such as Bondi, Parramatta, Cronulla, and Manly. Live music fans can find good local bands at Newtown and Annandale.

Sydney offers a wide range of cultural experiences with the iconic Opera House (home of Opera Australia and the Sydney Symphony), Sydney Town Hall, City Recital Hall, the State Theatre, the Royal Theatre, and the Wharf Theatre. Also earning great acclaim is the Sydney Dance Company, the Sydney Theatre Company, New Theatre (Newtown), Company B, Griffin Theatre Company, and the National Institute of Dramatic Art.

Sydney hosts a huge variety of festivals and cultural events. These include the Big Day Out rock festival, the extravagant and glitzy Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, the colourful Sydney Festival, the Biennale of Sydney, the Sydney Royal Easter Show, the popular Australian Idol final on the steps of the Opera House, and the largest New Years Eve celebrations and fireworks in Australia.

For those passionate about the arts Sydney provides great entertainment with the Sydney Film Festival, Tropfest, Flickerfest, the Sydney Writers Festival, Australian Fashion Week, and the Archibald Prize which is Australia's premier prize for portraiture organised by the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Sports fans are rewarded with the Rugby League Grand Final in September, the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race, and the annual City to Surf Run with approximately 20,000 participants.

Sydney has also hosted a number of renowned international sporting, political and cultural events including the 1938 British Empire Games, 2000 Summer Olympics, the 2003 Rugby World Cup, APEC Australia 2007, and World Youth Day 2008.

## History

Around the Sydney region there were 3 main Aboriginal tribes, the Ku-ring-gai, the Dharawal, and the Dharug, until the arrival of Europeans. The British First Fleet landed at Botany Bay in January 1788 with just 730 male and female convicts from Britain's overcrowded jails and

an assortment of military personnel. The new settlers established themselves at Sydney Cove, north of Botany Bay, and this is where the city of Sydney grew from.

Australia's states achieved federation on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January in 1901. New South Wales became a state of the new Commonwealth of Australia, and Sydney became the capital of New South Wales. The Harbour Bridge was opened in 1932 while the Opera House was not to open until 1973. It was during the Vietnam War that the infamous suburb of Kings Cross gained its reputation for sleazy entertainment and nightlife, which it still retains to this day.

## Climate

Sydney is comfortable to visit at any time of year; however summer can bring oppressive humidity and the odd torrential downpour. March to April and October to November are the best times of the year to visit with mild nights and clear, warm days. In spring (September to November) there's a higher chance of rain, usually clearing quickly. Average temperatures are around 25°C, though it can get to over 40°C in summer. Winters are cool rather than freezing cold, however can be quite rainy.