

# Canberra

**Canberra is the capital city of Australia. With a population of over 334,000 and covering an area of 805.6 kilometres<sup>2</sup> (kilometres square), it is Australia's largest inland city. The city is located at the northern end of the Australian Capital Territory, 280 kilometres south-west of Sydney (a 3 hour drive), and 650 kilometres north-east of Melbourne (a 7 hour drive). It was not until 1908 that the site of Canberra was selected for the location of the nation's capital, primarily as a compromise between Australia's two largest cities Sydney and Melbourne. Canberra is an entirely planned and purpose built capital city that incorporates large areas of natural vegetation. Built in a landscape of eucalyptus savanna, open grassland scrubland, swamp and dry eucalyptus forests have earned Canberra the title "bush capital".**

The Canberra International Airport provides direct domestic services to Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth, with connections to other domestic airports. There are direct daily flights to Albury and Newcastle in New South Wales. Canberra has many different types of accommodation in and close to the city centre, including numerous hotels and short-stay apartments, bed and breakfasts and backpacker hostels.

## Sights & Attractions

Canberra is home to a number of important and iconic national monuments and institutions. These include Parliament House, The High Court of Australia, The Australian War Memorial, the National Gallery of Australia, the National Portrait Gallery, the National Library of Australia, the National Archives of Australia, The National Museum of Australia and The Royal Australian Mint. The Molonglo River has been dammed to create serene Lake Burley Griffin in the heart of the city, the site of the Captain Cook Memorial and the National Carrillon. Also surrounding Canberra are the lakes Ginninderra and Tuggeranong. Other places of interest to visit in Canberra include the National Zoo and Aquarium, as well as the Australian National Botanic Gardens on Black Mountain.

From Canberra it is just a short 2 hour drive to the ski fields of the Snowy Mountains, the highest Australian mountain range. The Snowy Mountains boast the Australian mainland's highest mountain peak, Mount Kosciuszko.

Recreational activities available in Canberra include golf, various field sports, skateboarding, tennis, and swimming. Water sports such as rowing, water skiing and sailing are also very popular activities on Canberra's gorgeous lakes. Keen cyclists can explore the city on the Canberra-wide network of bicycle paths. Canberra Nature Parks offers a wide range of walking paths, mountain bike and horse trails.

Popular cultural events include the National Folk festival, Royal Canberra show, Summernats car festival, Stonefest (Canberra's largest music festival), the Canberra Multicultural festival held in February and the Celebrate Canberra festival which is held over 10 days in March

in conjunction with Canberra Day. Canberra Day is a public holiday observed in the city and the surrounding Australian Capital City (ACT) on the second Monday in March to celebrate the founding of Canberra. Attracting large numbers of visitors annually to Canberra is the spectacular Floriade flower festival each spring.

## History

It is believed, due to strong archaeological evidence, that humans have inhabited the Canberra area and the surrounding regions for at least 21,000 years. European settlement began in the area in just 1824. As the European presence increased, the indigenous population decreased dramatically, mainly from introduced European diseases. The word "Canberra" is derived from the name of the local aboriginal "Ngabri" people dialect, the word Kanbarra meaning "meeting place".

## Climate

Unlike the climates of most Australian state capital cities, all based in coastal areas and moderated by the sea, Canberra has very distinct seasons. Canberra's latitude, elevation and distance from the coast ensures hot, dry summers, and cold winters with heavy fog and frequent frosts, with a rare spot of snow. In approximately 1 out of 3 winters a light snow falls in the city, which is not generally widespread and quickly dissipates. Between September and March, the city does experience some thunderstorms, with rainfall maximums in spring and summer.

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