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New South Wales; Sydney and Much More

New South Wales is located in the eastern part of Australia and is the home of Australia's largest city, and the home of the 2000 Olympics, Sydney. New South Wales has the densest population because of Sydney and other coastal towns that lie within the state borders. The national capital, Canberra, and the Australian Capital Territory also lie within the New South Wales borders.

New South Wales is a diverse area with mountainous areas such as the Blue Mountains and the Snowy Mountains. To the west the land is dry and arid and the east coast is lush and green with farmlands in between.

The New South Wales winters are mild and the summers warm which make this a very favorable climate to live in. Many feel that the best time to visit is in the fall and spring which occurs in March-April and October-November respectively.

Some Key Attractions:

Sydney is the oldest settlement in Australia, established in 1788 as a penal colony by Captain Phillip. Originally the colony was to be established by the English at Botany Bay, but this was ignored and the settlement is where it is today. Faced with the native aboriginals and "strange" animals such as kangaroos, it must have been an unusual experience for those early British colonists.

Today, Sydney hugs the beautiful Sydney Harbour and the Australian coastline. The harbour and the beaches give Sydney a magnificent natural beauty. The harbour's many natural inlets make it possible for many people to live on the water or within site of the water. Sydney Harbour has 188 miles of shoreline and 35 miles of city beaches. One of the main methods of getting around Sydney is via the Harbour. This makes the waterways a busy venue for traffic with commuters and tourists making their way around the city. Sydney is packed with excellent hotels, restaurants, shopping and offers music and the arts to rival any city in the world.

The Rocks (Sydney): The new meets the old near Sydney's central business district. The Rocks, which is area of the first settlement, is full of old buildings that remind you of the early days in Sydney. Nearby you will find tall modern skyscrapers similar to many U.S. cities and other wonderful original structures such as the Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Today, The Rocks is a great place to explore Sydney's past, shop for Australian merchandise or to just sit at a harbourside restaurant where you can try the local food and a glass of the local wine.

Sydney Opera House (Sydney): Opposite The Rocks, you will find the Sydney Opera House. It is situated on Benelong Point and was designed by a Danish architect, Joern Utzon. The project was budgeted at A\$7.5 million but the project cost grew to the final A\$100 million. The pressure from officials eventually caused Utzon to flee back to Denmark. Today the Opera House is open for tours and obviously for the performing arts. It is an easy walk from The Rocks.

Sydney Harbour (Sydney): Sydney Harbour is a site to see in itself. We recommend that you take a tour on one of the many cruise providers such as Captain Cook Cruises. If you like something more exclusive, try one of the many yacht charter services. Another fun way is to just rent one of the water taxis. The water taxis are Sydney's equivalent to the New York Yellow Cab or the London Cab.

Darling Harbour (Sydney): Not far from the Sydney central business district and The Rocks, you will find a modern section of Sydney called Darling Harbour. It was once a derelict area of rotting wharfs and warehouses but is now a totally redeveloped area full of places to shop, museums and restaurants. It's the place where Sydneysiders go to stroll the harbour foreshores, meet for a coffee or a meal at one of the many waterside cafes and restaurants, visit one of the unique attractions or enjoy the many events and festivals held throughout the year. Some of the attractions include the Sydney Aquarium, Cockle Bay Wharf, the Powerhouse Museum and the National Maritime Museum.

Sydney Olympic Park (Sydney): The Olympic Park is located in an area called Homebush. It is too far to walk and you can best get there by taxi, train or a car rental. Bus tours are also available on the *Olympic Explorer*, where you will visit the major sites in the Homebush area and be able to listen to a commentary. Some of the major sites visited are Stadium Australia, the Aquatic Centre and the Superdome.

AMP Tower (Sydney): The AMP Tower is the tallest building in Sydney and the observation deck is the highest in the southern hemisphere. From the observation deck, you can enjoy a 360° view of Sydney. Also located in this building is the Skytour which is a basic but entertaining view of Australian life.

Sydney Beaches (Sydney): The Sydney beaches are a wonderful way to break up your site seeing and just relax in the sun. Bondi and Manly are probably the two most famous. Manly, the first of Sydney's Northern Beaches, sits on an isthmus that separates the calm waters of Sydney Harbour from the ocean swells of the South Pacific and is easily accessible from downtown Sydney by ferry. Bondi Beach is located in the Municipality of Waverley in east Sydney. The beach, roughly a kilometre long, is enclosed at the north and south by headlands. Every day of the year lifeguards patrol the beach between the yellow and red flags. Take a stroll along the beachside promenade. Away from the beach there are numerous cafes and restaurants, as well as hostels, hotels and a great variety of shops.

Short Stays in Sydney: You only have 2 days and are wondering what you should do in Sydney. Here are some ideas to enjoy your short stay in Sydney. The first thing to do is to

stay close to the action. It may cost more, but a stay at the Park Hyatt or the Four Seasons Hotels, in The Rocks, is worth it. From here you are close to the Opera House, Harbour Tours, the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the central business district and a whole host of great restaurants. In fact the Park Hyatt was rated as the number 1 hotel by *Travel and Leisure Magazine* for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific in their August 2001 and 2002 editions.

Day 1:

Think about taking a harbour cruise on your first morning, especially if the weather is nice. This will give you a good feel for life in Sydney and how the city is laid out. The longer cruise, which can take a few hours, will allow you to see a lot of this beautiful harbour. The beauty of this cruise is that you will get up close to the Sydney Opera House, the Sydney Harbour Bridge and get a feel as to how the more affluent Australians live along the shoreline in the many small coves and bays. The cruises typically leave from Circular Quay in downtown Sydney which is a short walk from The Rocks. This is a nice way to have a relaxing start to the day over coffee, tea or something a little stronger if you desire. There are many cruise services available but one of the more prominent companies is Captain Cook Cruises.

By the end of the cruise you will no doubt be ready for lunch. A great place to sit outside and eat some of Australia's famous seafood is Doyles Restaurant which, once again, is very close to the Park Hyatt Hotel. It is located at the Harbour Bridge end of the International Overseas Shipping Terminal at Circular Quay. The restaurant is directly opposite the Sydney Opera House, with breathtaking views of the Harbour. The King Prawns are a delicacy that you should try.

For the few hours that are left in the afternoon, you may just want to wander around The Rocks where you will find shopping arcades that have many unique shops, selling everything from Aboriginal crafts and Aussie bush-gear to the latest street-smart fashions. A slightly different shopping experience can be found on weekends, year-round, when the northern end of George Street comes alive with a covered outdoor market featuring original arts and crafts.

For dinner, there are any number of good restaurants and you can be sure that most of them in the area are fair to good but you may want to check with the hotel concierge. A good choice for a fine dining experience is Aria. It is located right next to the Sydney Opera House and the food and wine is excellent but expensive. However, you must remember that the exchange rate is very favorable for U.S. and European visitors. For an after dinner treat, it is only a short walk to the Opera House. You should book your tickets in advance.

Day 2:

Today, you can see another side of Sydney and have a lot of fun doing it. Try climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Sounds crazy but it's not. There is a company called Bridge

Climb that has the legal rights to take people on a tour all over the bridge. Of course this may not be advisable if you have a physical handicap as there is quite a lot of climbing involved as the name would suggest. The climb is very secure as you are always attached to the bridge and the pace is pretty slow so you will get plenty of time to rest. While you are enjoying the view, you will be able to listen to your guide give you a very interesting history of the bridge and the surrounding Sydney landmarks. The whole tour should take around 3 hours.

After climbing the bridge, take a short taxi ride over to Darling Harbour to get some lunch. There are many restaurants on the waterfront in the Darling Harbour area. After lunch, walk around and enjoy a range of world-class attractions offering exciting and unique experiences for every visitor. You can visit Australia's leading maritime & powerhouse museums, an aquarium, the world's largest movie screen, a laser show on the water and a magnificent Chinese Garden. Darling Harbour attractions are sure to inspire. When you are done with Darling Harbour, head on back to the hotel. One method is to catch a water taxi. This is a unique way to travel around Sydney. You should be able to identify them as they are yellow taxis not unlike the taxis in many U.S. cities expect they are boats. This is more expensive than a regular land taxi but it is more fun. The water taxi will drop you off right at the Park Hyatt. Ask the concierge about dinner reservations.

If you want to go it alone, try some of the restaurants in and around The Rocks or Circular Quay. If you like to have a few cocktails after dinner, you may want to try one of the many local pubs. One of special interest is the Lord Nelson which is Sydney's oldest pub which and was built in 1836. You may want to take a taxi as it is a bit of a walk.

The Blue Mountains are west of Sydney. Its is a relative short drive to the central hub, Katoomba, which is 110km (69miles) west from Sydney and takes approximately two hours. From Parramatta Road, take the Western Motorway (M4) at Strathfield. Or, for a more scenic route divert from the Great Western Highway north-west onto the Cumberland Highway to Windsor Road. From Windsor, take the Richmond Rd, which becomes the Bells Line Road.

This makes the Blue Mountains easy to see on a day trip or you can stay longer at one of the many lodgings such as bed and breakfasts. The scenery is often a majestic collection of rocky outcrops, ravines and rugged cliffs that are said to be 250 million years old. This area was home to the local aboriginals for 14,000 years before the arrival of the English. The mountains get their name from the eucalyptus forests which produce an oil that gives a blue haze to the mountains.

There are several towns such as Katoomba, Leura, Blackheath and Springwood along the way or in the Blue Mountains where to you can look for accommodation or just find a meal and take a break. Some of the key sites to see are the Three Sisters, Jenolan Caves and Wentworth Falls. The Three Sisters is a spectacular rock formation formed by years of erosion and Jenolan Caves are nine spectacular limestone caves that are open to the public.

The Hunter Valley Wine Country: As the NAPA Valley is to the U.S., the Hunter Valley is to Australia. A mere two hour drive north west of Sydney, Hunter Valley Wine Country is much more than just wine. There are vineyards, bed and breakfasts, hotels, tours and more. This is the site of Australia's first vineyards which were started in the 1830's producing fortified wines. Today, the Hunter Valley is the home of some of the world's best and most famous wines such as Lindemans, Rothbury Estates and Tyrells vineyards. The town of Cessnock is the gateway to the Hunter Valley and is home to the Hunter Valley major visitor center. There are many cafes and restaurants in the town of Pokolbin and many of the wineries have restaurants as well.

The Snowy Mountains stretch from the Canberra area to Victoria for approximately 300 miles. They are the home to Australia's highest mountain, Mount Kosciuszko and Australia's ski resorts such as Thredbo and Perisher.

The South Coast of New South Wales runs north for approximately 250 miles from the border of Victoria. It consists of a collection of beautiful beaches, small seaside towns and fishing villages. This makes this coastal area a good place to access whale watching cruises, to camp and to hike in the national parks or to just take a long walk along the unspoiled beaches. Some of the more popular locations include Eden, Jervis Bay, Batemans Bay, Pebbly Beach, Merimbula Beach and Ben Boyd National Park.

To catch a glimpse of the South Coast, you rent a car in Sydney and head south on the Princes Highway along the spectacular coastline. The region offers a magnificent diversity of coastal, forest, mountain and rural country. Its natural, unspoiled environment provides the atmosphere for a peaceful, relaxing or adventurous visit in contact with Australia's unique flora and fauna. The variety of natural experiences and the mildness of the climate identify the South Coast as an all-season destination. Depending on how far you want to go, you can drive from 2 to 5 hours to see this region. Here is a brief overview of some areas worth taking a look at. For more detailed information, we recommend that you log on to www.southcoast.com.au.

Key Areas Along the South Coast:

Shoalhaven - The Shoalhaven boasts a wide range of popular natural attractions. As well as its magnificent beaches and waterways, the Shoalhaven is home to the famous and beautiful areas of Jervis Bay, the Kangaroo Valley, Ettrema Wilderness, Budawang Ranges and Morton National Park.

Mollymook-Milton-Ulladalla Region - Beaches, Lakes and Bays abound with 35 klms of beaches to choose from. Mollymook is best known for its sweeping white sandy beach and family-friendly facilities. Mollymook Bay abounds with sea life and is home to the famous surfing Bottlenose Dolphins with frequent whale sightings during migration season

Eurobodalla Coast - The incredibly beautiful Eurobodalla Coast covers over 100 kilometres of spectacular coastline and pristine hinterland along the south coast of the state of NSW. This is

some of Australia's best coastal playground where you can experience a wide diversity of our natural environments, flora and fauna. Key towns include Batemans Bay, Moruya and Narooma.

The Sapphire Coast - The Sapphire Coast, also known as the Bega Valley, is the most southerly coastal region in NSW. This area is famous for its wonderful coastline and water activities such as game fishing and surfing. Popular towns include Pambula and Merimbula. Beaches are plentiful as are activities.

Other nearby regions include the national capital city of Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory, the Southern Highlands, and the Snowy Mountains. The Southern Highlands region boasts many beautiful and spectacular natural attractions to delight the visitor. The Wombeyan Caves, Mt Gibraltar and the Fitzroy Falls are some of the best known of these attractions. Canberra is Australia's modern capital city and offers a whole host of museums, galleries and memorials. The Snowy Mountain region covers a wide area of the highest mountain ranges in Australia, as well as the open plains of the Monaro and the foothills of the Snowy Mountains. This is where you will find Australia's premier ski fields.

Australian Capital Territory and Canberra: The Australian Capital territory is a relatively small area that is home to the capital city, Canberra. It is approximately 50 miles by 19 miles in area and lies within the New South Wales borders. The whole southwestern area of the Australian Capital Territory is occupied by the Namadgi National Park.

The City of Canberra used to be little more than a sheep station and farm country until Walter Burley Griffin won an international competition to design the city.

Today, Canberra is located in the northern part of the Australian Capital Territory, 300 km south-west of Sydney and 650 km north-east of Melbourne by road. The city is situated on a man made lake called Lake Burley Griffin. Canberra is Australia's major political city and the population has grown over the years to approximately 300,000 from 50,000 in 1960. Canberra and the Australian Capital Territory came into existence in the early 1900s after Australia was federated in 1901. Canberra is an Australian Aboriginal word meaning "meeting place".

As with many national capital cities, Canberra offers many museums, galleries and government buildings worth visiting. Canberra is home to the Parliament House, the Australian War Memorial, the National Gallery of Australia and Questacon, a science museum.

For outdoors activities, the Australian Capital Territory is located close to Australia's beautiful Snowy Mountains. The Namadgi National Park and the Tidinbilla Nature Reserve are close to Canberra making this area a favorite for hikers.

The best way to get to Canberra is to drive or to fly depending on your starting point. The airport is only 4 miles from the city center.

Some Canberra Attractions:

Parliament House is the center of attention in Canberra. It is built into the peak of Capital Hill

and guided tours are available where you learn about the story of democracy in Australia. You can also observe Australia's political process if Parliament is in session.

The Australian War Memorial was built to commemorate all Australians who lost their lives at war. The *Roll of Honour* lists all 102,600 names of those who have died. There is also a *Reflecting Pool* and a *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier* which gives the city a feeling similar to Washington D.C.

The National Gallery of Australia is home to 100,000 works of art with a diverse origin and style. It opened in 1982 and the core of the art works are Australian, including an Aboriginal art section.

The National Museum of Australia explores the heritage of Australia from the early Aboriginal days to the days of European settlement up until now.

The Australian National Botanic Gardens are home to a huge collection of Australian native plants. Approximately 90,000 plants and 5,000 species are on display.

The Royal Australian Mint has made more than 8 billion coins since 1965. Visitors can see designers at work, watch coins being made, learn about the history of Australian currency and purchase some of the commemorative coins that have been produced.

Questacon is the National Science and Technology Center with 200 hands on exhibits that help to make the education of science fun and entertaining.

Namadgi National Park covers almost 50% of the Australian Capital Territory and is located only 22 miles south of Canberra. The rugged bush land, rivers, snowy mountains and valleys make this a popular area to hike or to just get away from it all.

The North Coast of New South Wales is one of the great areas of Australia. The further you drive north the more tropical the country becomes. This coast runs approximately 560 miles north from Sydney to the Queensland border. Some key towns along the way are Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Byron Bay.

Port Macquarie (North Coast): Located on the New South Wales Holiday Coast at the mouth of the Hastings River, Port Macquarie boasts some of the most pristine waterways and magnificent beaches in Australia. With an abundance of things to do, beautiful nature reserves, and a colourful history, Port Macquarie is a coastal resort town that has something for everyone. The climate is noted for being one of the best in Australia with average temperatures ranging from 20C - 32C in Summer, and from 8C - 21C in Winter.

Coffs Harbour (North Coast): A major coastal resort town which is also famous for its bananas and fishing. It's located on Australia's holiday coast, where the mountains meet the sea some 570kms north of Sydney and about 350kms south of Brisbane. The town of Coffs Harbour has a population of over 20,000 people with average summer temperatures of 26C and an average winter temperatures of 18C.

Byron Bay (North Coast): Byron Bay is located on the far north coast of New South Wales and is Australia's most easterly town. Situated between the major Australian cities of Brisbane (175 km to the north) and Sydney (800 km to the south) the region is recognized as an international travel destination. Byron Bay enjoys a year-round subtropical climate with an average temperature of 25 degrees Celsius.

So, you can see that New South Wales offers a wide range of sites and activities from the cosmopolitan city of Sydney to the beautiful coastal beaches and the rugged Blue Mountains. Sydney is an ideal starting point to spend a few days and there are many places to visit outside of Sydney that are just a short drive away or, if you feel ambitious, you can drive all the way to Melbourne or Brisbane.

Driving From Sydney:

Blue Mountains

Distance: 1.5-2 hours from Sydney

What you'll see: Home to some of NSW's most stunning scenery, it's not surprising that the Blue Mountains is Australia's most recently listed World Heritage site. The blue haze in the air is caused by the evaporation of oil from the eucalyptus trees.

Things to do: Bushwalks, abseiling, rafting, canyoning and horse riding are all available in the region. Don't miss the awe-inspiring Three Sisters, the Scenicender which descends to the bottom of the Jamison Valley, or the many caves and walks of the Jenolan Caves. For a more sedate experience, enjoy the village life of Katoomba and Leura, with their old style cafes and shops just waiting to tempt you.

Our verdict: An easy day trip from Sydney but be tempted to stay overnight.

Web: www.bluemountainstourism.org.au

Hunter Valley Wine Country

Distance: 2 hours from Sydney

What you'll see: Hunter Valley Wine Country is Australia's oldest wine producing region specializing in Semillon, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz varieties.

Things to do: Enjoy a tippie (or ten) in the boutique wineries and vineyards – just hope that your designated driver waits for you! Or enjoy a picnic while you drink in the view: the stunning landscape is as varied as it is beautiful – and you'll see everything from farmland, pastures and rocky outcrops to sandstone cliffs, rugged mountains and spectacular rainforests of the Barrington Tops National Park. Explore Hunter Valley Wine Country on horseback, mountain biking, bush walking or a 4WD safari.

Our verdict: Makes a great day trip, but an even better weekend or mid week break!

Web: www.winecountry.com.au

South Coast

Distance: 2-3 hours from Sydney

What you'll see: The South Coast is a unique combination of unspoiled beaches, picturesque seaside towns, rainforests, spectacular scenery and quaint rural villages.

Things to do: Explore the pristine and uncrowded beaches that are perfect for scuba diving, snorkeling, fishing and swimming. Get the sand between your toes on Hyams Beach (which boasts the whitest sand in the world), and don't miss a visit to the nearby Murray's Beach, a fantastic snorkeling spot. Other options include bush-walking, mountain biking or four-wheel driving through the national parks, or you can head inland to check out the arts and craft shops in the historic town of Berry.

Our verdict: You'll need a few days to relax and explore the region properly.

Web: www.southcoast.com.au

Southern Highlands

Distance: 2 hours from Sydney

What you'll see: The Southern Highlands is well known for its history, scenery, waterfalls, bushwalks, gardens, shopping and welcoming accommodation.

Things to do:: The country towns of Mittagong, Bowral and Moss Vale are abundant with craft shops, antiques, galleries, nurseries waiting to be explored. Enjoy the warm country hospitality of the local restaurants, cafes and coffee shops, or wander through the weekend country markets where you can purchase an array of old wares, craft, cooking, preserves and produce.

Our verdict: Perfect destination if you're after a weekend in the country or mid week break.

Web: www.southern-highlands.com.au

Pacific Coast

Distance: Minimum 1 day drive

What you'll see: For those with a little more time on their hands, take the Pacific Coast

Touring Route linking Sydney and Brisbane. Travel along the stunning coastline with its all year-round temperate climate.

Things to do: Don't miss whale watching at any one of the many beaches or on a cruise from May-July and September-October. Tour the Aboriginal galleries and cultural centres at Singleton, Forster, Tinonee, Nambucca Heads, New Italy and South Tweed Heads, or take a rainforest walk and spectacular skywalk at Dorrigo World Heritage National Park. If you get peckish, head to Wallis Lake where you can sample rock oysters fresh from the rack – or cast your reel for some of the world's best fishing in the many beaches, rivers and estuaries along the Pacific Coast route.

Our verdict: A little further afield, this region has plenty to tempt.

Web: www.pacificcoast.com.au

Sydney to Melbourne – Coastal Route

Distance: Minimum 1 day drive; allow 2 days with a stopover

What you'll see: Experience the best of Australia's heritage, untouched wilderness and unique coastal lifestyle when traveling from Sydney to Melbourne.

Things to do: Indulge yourself with the freshest seafood straight from the trawlers at Ulladulla. Visit the surfing kangaroos on Pebbly Beach, or take a cruise to Montague Island Nature Reserve to see the fur seals, seabirds and little penguins. There's also the chance to sample the boutique wines and award winning cheeses at Bega, or (at certain times of the year) you can go whale-watching at Eden.

Our verdict: If you're after incredible scenery, there's no better way to cross the state.

Web: www.sydney-melbourne.com.au

More Information About Driving in Australia:

Australians drive on the left hand side of the road as they do in England and some of the Caribbean countries such as Jamaica and Barbados. This can be confusing for Americans and Continental Europeans but after a short time on the road you usually get the hang of it. You can become complacent however and problems may occur, especially after making a turn. If you are not concentrating, you may find yourself facing oncoming traffic once you have made the turn at an intersection. Take your time and think about it. If you are on a road with two way traffic you will most likely be closer to the center line on the road if you are the driver than if you are the passenger. The reason for this is that the driver's seat and steering wheel are also on the opposite side of the vehicle compared to America. Think about it. Take your time. It's probably best to start out in an automatic car as the manual stick shift cars in Australia have the gears shifted with your left hand.

In most cases, the maximum speed limit in cities and towns is 60 km/h (35 mph) and 100 km/h (60 mph) on country roads and highways, unless signs indicate otherwise. Police regularly check motorists' speed with radar and camera devices.

Australia has very strict drink-driving laws and random breath testing is conducted in all Australian States. The limit is only 0.05 compared with 0.08 to 0.1 in the United States.

All drivers must hold a current drivers licence (with an English translation shown on the licence) from their country of residence, or an International drivers permit. State laws stipulate that licences must be carried at all times when driving.

Australia is a huge country. Please allow yourself plenty of time if you plan to drive around the country. It is a wonderful way to see Australia but many people from the northern hemisphere are surprised by Australia's immense size.

Climate:

As you can probably tell from reading this, New South Wales enjoys a very nice climate. The winters are mild and the summers are warm, sometimes hot. The average summer maximum temperature in Sydney is around 80 degrees F (27 C) and the minimum temperatures are in the 60's. The summers are in December, January and February. The average winter maximum temperature in Sydney is around 60 degrees F (16 C) and the minimum are in the 40's. The winters are in June, July and August.



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