



Global Mouse Travel

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Frequently Asked Questions and Tips on Travelling to Australia

What is the Weather & Climate like in Australia?

Australia's seasons are opposite to those in the Northern Hemisphere * Spring is September - November * Summer is December - February * Fall is March - May * Winter is June – August.

Australia's climate is generally pleasant without extremes in temperature. Broadly, there are two climatic zones in Australia. About 40% of Australia is in the Tropical Zone - that is north, above the Tropic of Capricorn. The cities of Cairns and Darwin lie in this zone. The remaining areas of Australia lie in the Temperate Zone, including Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Adelaide and Perth.

Due to Australia's vast size, there are variations within these two zones. The Temperate Zone has all four seasons, while those in the Tropical Zone have two - summer is 'wet' and winter is 'dry'

Do I need to have a Passport and Visa to enter Australia?

To enter Australia, a passport valid for at least 6 months after the completion of your trip and a pre-arranged entry authority known as an 'ETA' (Electronic Travel Authority) is required. An ETA is equivalent to a visa, but there is no stamp or label in your passport and there is no need for you to visit an Australian diplomatic office to submit an application.

The tourist ETA is valid for multiple entries into Australia (each entry to a maximum of three months) over a period of one year. A business ETA can be obtained, allowing multiple entries into Australia for the life of your passport. Restrictions apply. ETA's should be obtained at least ten days prior to your trip.

Visitors not eligible for an ETA and those wishing to stay for longer than three months, or to work, must obtain a visa to enter. Further advice and application forms may be obtained from the Australian consulate in Washington DC.

Cell phone usage in Australia?

At the time of your balance payment, we will request your cell phone details so that we may contact whilst traveling if necessary. We recommend you contact your cell plan provider prior to departure to discuss international calling/texts/data plans. Once in Australia for any data usage check for WIFI connections at your accommodation. We highly recommend you switch off your data roaming option at all times except when you deem it necessary to download data when not connected to WIFI.

What is the customs quarantine procedure like when entering Australia?

Food, plant material and animal products from overseas could introduce some of the world's most serious pests and diseases into Australia, devastating the valuable agriculture and tourism industries and unique environment. You must declare for inspection all food, plant material and animal products on arrival in Australia to ensure they are free of pests and diseases. More details...

Can I bring Tax Free/Duty Free items into Australia?

Most personal items such as new clothing, footwear, and articles for personal hygiene and grooming (excluding fur and perfume concentrates) may be brought into Australia in your accompanied baggage, free from duty and tax.

Personal goods are free from duty and tax if they are:

- owned and used by you overseas for 12 months or more
- imported temporarily (a security may be required by the Department).

For other goods, limits apply. These include goods that are purchased overseas and goods that are purchased in Australia duty or tax free (that have been previously exported), or from an inwards duty free shop on arrival into Australia. Duty free concessions do not apply to commercial goods.

If you are aged 18 years or over, you can bring up to AUD900 worth of general goods into Australia duty free.

If you are under 18 years of age the limit is AUD450.

If you are a crew member, the limit is AUD450.

There are no duty free concessions on tobacco or alcohol for travellers aged under 18 years of age.

What is and how much is the Departure tax?

Australia's Passenger Movement Charge (departure tax) is \$A60 per person and is pre-paid with your international airline ticket. Exemptions apply to children under 12 years and 24-hour transit passengers.

What languages are spoken in Australia?

English is the common language of Australia. However, as Australia is a multicultural society, you may hear other languages spoken.

What is the time difference between Australia and the U.S.?

The east coast of Australia is 15 hours ahead of the east coast of the US, and 18 hours ahead of the west coast of the US.

Both countries operate daylight savings time during their summer months, from April to October eastern Australia is 14 hours ahead of the east coast of the US, and 17 hours ahead of the west coast of the US.

From October to March, Australia is 16 hours ahead of the east coast of the US, and 19 hours ahead of the west coast of the US.

Not all Australian states observe daylight saving, so times in the country can vary by one hour.

What currency is used in Australia?

Australian currency (\$A) is decimal with the dollar as the basic unit (100 cents = A\$1). Notes come in \$100, \$50, \$20, \$10 and \$5 denominations. Coins come in \$2, \$1, 50c, 20c, 10c and 5c denominations.

What Credit Cards can I use in Australia?

The most commonly accepted credit cards are American Express, Bankcard, MasterCard, Visa and JCB.

How should I obtain cash in Australia?

Whilst exchange facilities are available at international airports and changing travellers' checks can be done at most banks, we recommend cash withdrawals be made from bank ATM's. Nearly all Australian ATMs accept US bank cards, the rate of exchange is competitive, and the transaction is small (the fee will vary from bank to bank)

What Taxes are currently in place in Australia?

Australia has a Goods and Services Tax (GST) of 10%. Prices in Australia are shown as inclusive of GST. Departing travellers may be able to claim a refund for GST paid on goods purchased in Australia. The goods must have been purchased no earlier than 30 days before leaving Australia. Refunds can only be made on purchases totalling A\$300 or more from each store. Tourist Refund Scheme (TRS) facilities are located at international airports and cruise-liner terminals. To claim, travellers must show their passport, international boarding pass, retailer's tax invoice and the goods. Other conditions apply.

When and how much should I tip in Australia?

Tipping is optional. However, the recommended amounts are:

Restaurants: 10% for good service is standard

Porters: \$A1-2 per bag

Tour Guides: optional

What electric voltage does Australia use?

230/240 volts, 50 Hz, 3 pin plugs. The power supply is 220/240 volts AC. Sockets accept three-flat-pin plugs, so an adaptor is needed. 110v appliances will need a voltage converter.

Do I need insurance when traveling to Australia?

Before your visit you should arrange sufficient medical and travel insurance. Ensure the policy is adequate to cover costs for ambulance or helicopter rescue, emergency surgery, or transportation home. We offer travel insurance policies – ask your Global Mouse Travel Planner for more details.

Do I need to get any specific vaccinations before entering Australia?

Vaccinations are not required unless you have come from, or visited, a yellow fever infected country or zone within six days before arrival. No other health certificate is required to enter Australia.

Is all water safe to drink in Australia?

It is safe to drink tap water anywhere in Australia. Bottled mineral water is available throughout the country.

What precautions should I take to protect myself from the sun in Australia?

The sun in Australia is extremely strong, especially in summer (December – February). Wear a hat to protect your face and sunglasses to protect your eyes and a minimum SPF15+ to prevent sunburn.

What is the beach safety like in Australia?

Popular beaches are patrolled by volunteer Surf Life Saving Association members from October to April. Always swim between the red and yellow flags that mark the safest area.

When is the stinger season?

From late October to early May, venomous box jellyfish, also known as 'stingers', appear in the coastal waters of Northern Australia. These jellyfish do not exist in the waters surrounding most of the Islands in Queensland and are very rarely found on the Outer Barrier Reef, allowing visitors to enjoy the Great Barrier Reef year-round.

In the Northern Territory, stingers are present at all beaches, whilst in Western Australia, they affect the Kimberley coastline. Where beaches are affected by stingers there are clearly marked warning signs for visitors

Many beaches affected by stingers have protective enclosures, and visitors should restrict their swimming to these areas during Stinger season.

What do I need to know about driving in Australia?

Australians drive on the left-hand side of the road. The steering wheel is on the right-hand side of the car. The maximum speed limit in cities and towns is 60 km/h (35 mph) and on country roads and highways, 100 km/h (62mph) to 110km/h (68 mph) unless signs indicate otherwise. Strict drink-driving laws apply. Drivers and passengers must wear seat belts at all times.

Visitors may drive in Australia on a valid overseas driver's license for the same class of vehicle. Licenses must be carried when driving.

If the driver's license is not in the English language, the visitor must carry a translation with the permit. An International Drivers Permit is not enough by itself and must be accompanied by a valid driver permit.

Petrol (Gasoline) in Australia comes in super leaded, unleaded regular and premium unleaded grades and is sold by the litter. Prices are usually higher in country areas. Petrol stations are plentiful. Trading hours vary although many service stations operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Most accept international credit cards.

Entering Australia with controlled drugs on you or in your baggage?

- Don't bring medicines or medical devices into Australia for anyone other than yourself or an immediate family member.
- For prescription medicines, bring the prescription with you or have a letter from your doctor that outlines what you are taking and how much you are bringing with you.
- Keep the original packaging for your medicines and medical devices intact so they can be easily identified.
- Do not bring more than a 3-month supply with you.
- Check what medicines need to be declared at the border at the Department of Home Affairs website. You must declare any medicines which may be subject to abuse or misuse. This includes steroids, strong pain medicines, cannabis and other restricted medicines.

What should I pack?

Document Checklist

- Passport and Visa paperwork
- Photo ID
- Copies of itinerary, Summary of services & E-vouchers, ID, and passport
- Travel Insurance
- Bank cards (be sure to advise your bank of your travel plans down under.)

What to Bring:

- Swimming Wear
- Beach towel
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Light & Rain Jacket/umbrella
- Camera
- Medication - (If you are taking prescription medication in your carry-on, you will need to bring a doctor's note or copy of your prescription)
- Toiletries
- Comfortable shoes (for outdoor activities & walking)
- Sandals/flip flops
- Going out shoes
- Jeans/pants
- Shorts

- Sweaters/sweatshirts
- Long sleeve shirts
- Short sleeve shirts
- Jacket
- Sleep wear
- Travel-sized toiletries
- First Aid travel kit
- Insect repellent
- Electrical converter/universal plug**

** The electrical current in Australia is 240/250 volts, AC 50Hz. The Australian three pin power outlet is different from that in North America so you will need an adapter socket. If your appliances are not 240/250 volts you will need a voltage converter. Universal outlets for 240V or 110V appliances are usually found in leading hotels.

Travelling to the Northern Territory consider bringing:

- Hiking shoes or sneakers – there is a lot of walking to be done in the outback
- A hat and water bottle – to help deal with the desert heat
- Clothes that can get dirty – the red dirt of the desert can make white clothes dirty very quickly
- Small torch If going in the outback at night

