THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO BACKPACKING IN AUSTRALIA
The Ultimate Guide to Backpacking in Australia

It’s a well-known fact that Australia is a backpacker’s paradise.

The wide-open roads, breathtaking sunsets, laid-back lifestyle, diverse landscapes and epic beaches, make this country totally unique and the perfect destination for the trip of a lifetime.

To help you with planning your upcoming trip we’ve put together the ultimate guide to backpacking in Australia. It’s filled with insider information, expert tips and handy hints from experienced travel bloggers and the Traveller’s Autobarn team who currently live and work in Australia.

Read on for everything you need to know about Australia’s main cities, what you need to do when you first arrive and the cost of travelling in Australia.

Here’s what you can find in the guide:

1. Getting here
2. Guide to Australian cities & local’s tips
3. What you need to do when you first arrive
4. Cost of travelling in Australia
5. Top 5 Australian experiences
6. What to bring with you to Australia
7. How to find a job
8. Guide to road trips
1. GETTING HERE

One of your biggest expenses will be the cost of the airfare to get to Australia.

To avoid taking too large a chunk out of your backpacker budget, it’s important that you shop around to find the best deal out there.

Flights to Australia can cost anywhere upwards of £550/ $1100 AUD/ €750, and if you plan to travel during peak seasons (Summer), then expect to pay around £1000/$1958 AUD / €1397.

Here are some top tips to help you hunt down a great deal.

1. The most expensive time to fly is between December and February – the height of summer in Australia. The cheapest time to fly to Australia is in the winter months, between May and July.

2. As a general rule, you should try to book your flights as far in advance as possible. However, keep your eye out for flash flight sales by signing up to the email newsletters of the main airlines or checking websites such as Flight Centre or STA Travel.

3. Although Darwin and Perth are closer to Europe, fare to Australian cities doesn’t differ much and you will have far more choice flying into Sydney or Melbourne on the East Coast.

4. If you are not sure when you are going to be flying back home, look for a travel agent who can offer you a flexible air ticket. These tickets can allow you the opportunity to change the date of your flights for a small cost.
2. A GUIDE TO AUSTRALIA’S MAIN CITIES & LOCAL TIPS

Australian cities offer a mix of cosmopolitan culture, awesome food and drink, amazing natural landscapes and outdoor lifestyle.

Add into the mix the fact that all of Australia’s main cities aren’t any more than a couple of hours drive away from epic landscapes, mountain ranges, world famous beaches and national parks.

Let’s find out a little bit more about each of Australia’s main cities:

Sydney, located in New South Wales on the East coast of Australia, is one of the most famous cities in the world. It’s known for it’s iconic Opera House and Harbour Bridge. Life in the city revolves around it’s enormous harbour, and with 70 excellent beaches nearby you’ll never be short of a place to kick back and relax.

The weather in Sydney is often hot and humid during the summer, with cool (but mild) winters.

“Picking a top 3 for Sydney is really tough, so much of the city is simply amazing. If I have to choose 3 I would start with:

1. A visit to Taronga Zoo, where you can enjoy a beautiful boat ride through the harbour, stunning views of the city and take your time exploring one of the nicest zoos I have ever been to.

2. The botanical gardens are also lovely. A great spot for a picnic lunch not to mention the bird watching and sunset views of the opera house and harbour.

3. Finally we really enjoyed the Rocks district. Walking around hitting up a bar, or simply enjoying a good meal the location is really perfect and the energy is palpable. This neighborhood was our favorite in all of Sydney by far!”

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Melbourne is the state capital of Victoria and is renowned for its cafe culture, arty vibes and vibrant music scene.

It’s also been named as one the most livable cities four times in a row. Beat that!

Melbourne has warm summers, with average temperatures ranging from 23 – 26°C. Winter is cooler, with an average temperature of 15°C. Melbourne has a reputation for changeable weather, and it’s been said that you can experience all 4 seasons in one day.

Canberra is the national capital of Australia, and is also the state capital of Australia’s smallest state, Australian Capital Territory. It’s home to some interesting museums, great parks and state buildings.

Canberra is relatively dry, with warm to hot summers and cool winters. It’s position as an inland city means that it is rarely humid or windy.

“Melbourne is the home of Aussie sport, so go to a footy game at the MCG (maybe visit the sports museum if you have time).  
2. Visit the immigration museum for a really interesting look at Australia’s past.  
3. Go to one of many laneway or alley bars that Melbourne is famous for!”

“Canberra is a great city for foodies. The National Art Gallery of Australia has a great restaurant and the views from the top are amazing.  
2. Take a hot air balloon flight over Canberra. The views are amazing and it’s well worth the price. Another option is walking up Black Mountain, a round-trip takes around an hour. The view over Canberra is amazing from the top. Make sure to wear half decent footwear, as the gravel can be quite coarse and slippery in some parts.  
3. Sunday Sessions. The Sunday sessions in Canberra are pretty decent. Tongue and Groove is my favourite place for Sunday beers and music in the heart of the Canberra city.”
Located in Southern Australia, Adelaide is bang on the doorstep of some of Australia’s most famous wine regions. Wine tour anyone? With the rolling hills to the west and beautiful sandy beaches to the east, this is a city that has something for everyone.

Lots of sunshine, hot summers and mild winters makes Adelaide comparable to a Mediterranean climate. Average temperatures in summer hit 28°C, while winter sees an average of 15°C per day.

Assistant Brand Manager of the Brisbane office, Sam Macleod, loves living in sunny Brisbane. Here are his 3 favourite things to do on the weekend in the sunshine capital.

1. Take a trip so Southbank Parklands - there is the artificial beach, lots of little restaurants and cafes.

2. Spend a couple of hours in the Gallery of Modern art and Museum, which is adjacent to Southbank.

3. Followed by a cruise up/down at will on the Red Brisbane Ferry which is free... which we normally follow on with hopping off at the ferry terminal beside Queen street to finish off with shopping.

Our Infringement Administrator at the Sydney office, Franciska E, loved her recent visit to Adelaide. Here are her recommendations for the top 3 things to do when you’re in town.

1. Visit the Art Gallery of South Australia. The gallery is in its self a piece of art and alone worthy of a visit. The free admission is a bonus, too.

2. Take a trip to the Central Market. Satisfy your obscure culinary cravings at the 250-odd stalls. From a slice of salami from the Mettwurst Shop to a crumb of English Sillton from the Smelly Cheese Shop there is something for everyone. Adelaide’s Chinatown is right next door too, so you won’t leave hungry.

3. Spend the afternoon relaxing in the beautiful botanical gardens in Adelaide. They offer free 1½-hour guided walks depart the Schomberg Pavilion at 10.30am daily.
Darwin is Australia’s only tropical city and is surrounded by sea on three sides. It’s a small city located in the Northern Territory.

Darwin has two distinct seasons, wet and dry. The dry season runs from May until October and temperatures typically range from 21 – 32°C. The wet season occurs between November – April.

3. WHAT YOU NEED TO DO WHEN YOU FIRST ARRIVE

1. Get yourself an Aussie SIM card

One of the first things you need to do when you arrive is to get yourself an Aussie SIM card.

Look out for a ‘Pre-Paid’ SIM card that enables you to ‘Pay As You Go’. Topping up regularly can mean you get access to free credit that can be used to phone home, or you can buy additional data so you can get online.

2. Register for a Medicare Card

The Australian Government has an agreement with New Zealand, United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, Italy, Belgium, Malta, Slovenia and Norway.

If you come from one of these countries then you are entitled to gain access to Medicare – this means you can get help with the cost of essential medical treatments while in Australia.

You are only entitled once you have registered, so if you are planning on travelling around Australia for a couple of months and are on a holiday working visa, make an appointment at your local Medicare office once you arrive.
3. Pick up a travel card

If you have touched down in one of Australia’s main cities then look to get a local travel card such as the ‘Myki’ in Melbourne or the ‘Opal’ card in Sydney. It helps you gain access to discounted travel across the city on public transport and will help keep your spend down to a minimum.

4. Know your visa terms and conditions

If you are planning on travelling around the country for a couple of months (with no work) then you may consider a Tourist Visa. If you plan on staying longer and want to undertake work for some extra cash, then you’ll need to apply for a Working Holiday Visa (subclass 417).

5. Get a bank account

If you are planning to stay in Australia for more than a couple of months and are planning to undertake work while you are here, then you will need an Australian bank account.

Some banks, such as Commonwealth Bank and Westpac even allow you to open account before you arrive in the country – meaning all you have to do once you arrive in Australia is show up at your local branch to activate the account.

It is useful to apply for a Tax File number online if your visa allows you to work in Australia. A tax file number, commonly known as a TFN, is your personal reference number in the Australian tax and superannuation systems. A TFN is also useful if you intend to keep money in a bank account, because you may be required to pay tax on the interest.
4. THE COST OF TRAVELLING IN AUSTRALIA

Let’s get one thing straight, Australia is never going to be as cheap as backpacking around Asia. However with some savvy planning, insider tips and smart choices, it’s easy to have an awesome time on a backpacker budget in Australia.

Here is a breakdown of typical daily costs to help you work out how much you will need to budget for when you are backpacking in Australia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>There are plenty of options available to backpackers in Australia from couch surfing and campervans to hostels and motels.</th>
<th>Try to budget around $35 - $50 per night for budget hostel accommodation. If you’re renting a campervan to live in costs can be as little as $35 a day.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food and Drink</td>
<td>Eating out can get pricey but if you’re savvy there are plenty of options available for backpackers on a budget. Try Chinatown, local markets or food courts in the CBD for budget friendly options.</td>
<td>Recommended daily budget is $15.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Hitting the open road and travelling around Australia is most certainly going to be something you’ll want to do. But pre-planning your travel.</td>
<td>Greyhound passes (hop on / hop off coaches) start from $329. Domestic flights around Australia between the main cities start from around $70. If you want to drive yourself then campervans or used cars start from $35 a day to hire.</td>
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We asked seasoned traveller Dani Heinrich from top travel blog globetrottergirls.com what her top 3 tips were for travelling on a budget. Here’s what she said:

1. **Go out for lunch, not dinner**

   “Most places have a special lunch menu that is much cheaper than the dinner menu. Going out for dinner is expensive, but if you go out for lunch instead, you get a better deal (often including an appetizer or drink). I usually go out for lunch and prepare something from the supermarket for dinner.”

2. **Team up with other travelers**

   “I usually ask around to see if there are other people who are planning to do the same things I want to do, since travelling with someone makes everything cheaper.

   Some tour agencies offer discounts on tours if there’s more than one person, car rentals and gas costs divided by two (or four) get much more affordable, for example you can all go grocery shopping together and split the cost for sandwich ingredients. Remember that sharing a room with someone is also cheaper than booking a single room.”

3. **Plan ahead**

   “My biggest mistake is that I often don’t plan in advance, which ends up costing me a lot of money. No matter if it’s flights, buses, trains or hostels, the earlier you book, the better the deal you get. As soon as you know your travel dates, start booking accommodation, transportation, and activities. As for activities, I always look for online discounts, groupons or admission-free days - for museums for example.”
5. TOP 5 TRAVELLER EXPERIENCES

There are so many once in a lifetime experiences in Australia it can seem a little overwhelming, so we’ve put together a list of what we think are some of the best unique Aussie experiences!

1. Travel the world’s longest highway at 14,500km.

Hiring a campervan, sticking on your favourite playlist, winding down the windows and hitting the highway is pretty much a right of passage. There are so many epic road trips to choose from you’ll be spoilt for choice.

2. View the Southern Lights in Tassie

Tasmania is one of the best places in Australia where you can experience the Aurora Australis - The Southern Lights.

3. Join a camel tour along Cable beach

Ride into the sunset along the golden sands of Cable Beach on the west coast of Australia.
4. Swim with whale sharks on Ningaloo Reef

For a totally unique, once in a lifetime experience, head to the coast of Exmouth in Western Australia where you can swim with whale sharks.

5. Sunbathe on the whitest sand in the world

The Guinness World Records has accredited Jervis Bay - on the south coast of New South Wales – as having the whitest sand in the world.
6. WHAT TO BRING WITH YOU TO AUSTRALIA

Whether you’re backpacking for a couple of weeks, months or even for a whole year - one of the biggest challenges you’ll face before you head to Oz is deciding on what to take with you.

Bringing too much stuff with you can really shape your trip – trust us! Over packing and lugging around 30kg will become pretty annoying, pretty quickly.

To make it as easy as possible we’ve created this handy packing checklist that you can tick off.

**Essential Packing tips**

Remember that whatever you bring could be lost or stolen – so avoid bringing anything valuable or sentimental.

Consider bringing things that could be used for multiple purposes, like a sarong that can double up as a sheet, dress or something to lie on when you’re on the beach.

It’s very easy and affordable to pick up most of the same brand and items you would buy at home – so don’t stress about stocking up.
6. HOW TO FIND A JOB IN AUSTRALIA

If you are on a ‘Working Holiday Visa (Subclass 417)’ then it’s likely that you will be looking to pick up some work for some extra cash as you make your way around Australia.

According to TNT Downunder Magazine there are three top websites for expats and travellers looking for work in Australia.

- TNT Jobs
- Network Nursing Agency
- VisitOz.org

Other popular websites dedicated specifically to backpacker jobs also include:


**Working for your 2\textsuperscript{nd} year visa extension**

If you are looking to get a 12 month extension on your visa then you will need to complete the obligatory 88 days of work in a ‘specified industry in regional Australia’.

Fruit picking work is a great opportunity to save a little money and experience regional Australia, while living and working with fellow backpackers. TNT Downunder Magazine has rounded up some of the best regions to visit where you can easily get fruit picking work.

- Spend time in **Shepperton, Victoria** – located near to Melbourne and the Snowy Mountains. This region offers fruit picking jobs all year round.
- Drive up to **Mareeba, Queensland** for tropical fruit picking, home to Australia’s best mango and paw paw harvests.
- Head to **The Riverland in South Australia**, a region known for its orchards and vineyards.
Whether you are a gap year backpacker, budget traveller, or tourist on the cheap, discover campervan hire Australia with Travellers Autobarn.

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