

*Day 1: One perfect day in Sydney*



Manly ferry, Sydney Harbour, Sydney, New South Wales © Destination NSW

Seeing [Sydney](#) is easy on a budget because many of the city's best attractions are free, or cost just a few dollars. Start with a walk through the historic village, [The Rocks](#), which sits on the harbour, right underneath the famous Sydney Harbour Bridge. This area contains many narrow, cobblestone laneways and historic buildings made of local sandstone, including Sydney's oldest surviving pub, [The Lord Nelson Brewery Hotel](#). Stop at The Lord Nelson for a coffee or glass of local beer before walking to the ferry terminal at [Circular Quay](#), about eight minutes away. Board the [ferry](#) for the scenic, 30-minute ride to [Manly Beach](#), taking in sights such as the [Sydney Opera House](#) and the Harbour Bridge. Enjoy an affordable meal at [Manly Wharf Hotel](#) and stroll the famously beautiful beachfront before catching the return ferry back to Circular Quay. Next, walk over the Sydney Harbour Bridge and back. People spend hundreds of dollars climbing its famous arch, but walking across the bridge is free and offers another spectacular perspective. Finish off your day watching the sun set behind the bridge with a drink at [Opera Bar](#), right beside the Opera House.

*Day 2: Day trip by train to the Blue Mountains*



Scenic Cableway, Katoomba, Blue Mountains, New South Wales © Destination NSW

The World Heritage-listed wilderness of the [Blue Mountains](#) is an easy two-hour train ride from Sydney's Central Station. Get off at Katoomba and take the signposted 10-minute walk to Echo Point to see one of the [most photographed landmarks](#) in the country, the sandstone towers called the [Three Sisters](#). From here, you can take a 45-minute walk that offers great views over the Jamison Valley or follow the longer, more challenging [Giant Stairway trail](#) down into the valley, along the base of the cliffs and back up again, over roughly three hours. Alternatively, take a ride on the world's steepest passenger railway and get a bird's eye view from either [Scenic Cableway](#) or the glass-floored [Scenic Skyway](#). All three depart from [Scenic World](#). Enjoy afternoon tea in one of Katoomba's beautiful Art Deco cafés. The Paragon turned 100 in 2016 and serves delicious handmade chocolates for just a few dollars. Or order a glass of bubbles in the opulent Champagne Charlies bar at the historic [Carrington Hotel](#) before boarding a train and heading back down the mountain to Sydney.



*Day 3: Take a road trip up the Legendary Pacific Coast*



Emerald Beach, Coffs Coast, New South Wales © ST Surf Images

Australia is one the best countries in the world for [road tripping](#). Hire a car and head north out of the city on the Pacific Highway, a route taken by many Sydneysiders on their annual summer pilgrimage to holiday towns such as [Coffs Harbour](#) and [Byron Bay](#). This popular route is sometimes known as "the Legendary Pacific Coast". Over the next three days, you'll enjoy a relaxed, scenic drive to your ultimate destination, the [Gold Coast](#), but your first stop is only two hours away. At the [Australian Reptile Park](#), you can watch some of Australia's most venomous snakes and spiders being milked to produce antivenom, and meet native animals such as wombats, platypus and kangaroos. Next stop is the town of [Port Macquarie](#), 2.5 hours north of the Reptile Park. Here, you can join a free tour of the world's first [koala hospital](#), held daily at 3pm, before driving the final two hours to the town of Coffs Harbour. Gaze out at the horizon from one of the area's many coastal beaches, like [Emerald Beach](#). It's not only surfers that come to enjoy the waves here, but also kangaroos. Coffs Harbour is a good spot to spend the night, with plenty of affordable holiday units and resorts.

*Day 4: Go bananas about the beaches*



Big Banana Fun Park, Coffs Harbour, New South Wales © Big Banana

It's a little known fact that there are more than 150 giant sculptures of "big things" across Australia, from supersized pineapples to enormous potatoes. At Coffs Harbour you'll see the sculpture that started the craze in 1964: the [Big Banana](#). The Big Banana Fun Park is great for kids and the chocolate-covered frozen bananas on a stick are a treat. Spend the morning here, then drive to the seaside town of [Yamba](#). This is the longest stretch of driving you'll do, a five-hour stint, but it's worth it. At Yamba, you can try some of the town's famous prawns at the [Yamba Marina](#), where several seafood shops get prawns straight from the fishing boats. Walk off lunch on the short walking trail in nearby [Iluka Nature Reserve](#), part of the World Heritage-listed Gondwana Rainforests. From here it's around a 90-minute drive to famous [Byron Bay](#), where there are holiday apartments and cabins close to the beach.

*Day 5: Chill out in Byron Bay*



Cape Byron Lighthouse, Byron Bay, New South Wales © James Horan, Destination NSW

Cape Byron is the most easterly point on the Australian mainland, so get up early and head to the lighthouse to be one of the first in country to watch the sun rise. Then head to one of the town's many cafés for breakfast. The [Pass Café](#), at the lighthouse end of the beach, is a locals' favourite. Spend a day relaxing on the beach, kayak with dolphins with [Cape Byron Kayaks](#) or take a surfing lesson with [Mojosurf](#). If you are here between June and November join one of the local tour operators on a [whale watching](#) cruise.



*Day 6: High times on the Gold Coast*



Miami-North Burleigh Lookout, Gold Coast, Queensland © Tourism and Events Queensland

It's just a one-hour drive from Byron to the [Gold Coast](#), famous for its high rise towers, high energy theme parks and glitzy shopping malls. You don't have to spend big to enjoy it, though, because the beaches are the main attraction. The Gold Coast can seem like one endless stretch of sand, but each beach offers something new. A few of the best are the beaches in [Burleigh](#) and [Surfers Paradise](#). After you arrive in the Gold Coast, view it all is from the [Skypoint Observation Deck](#) of Q1, a building that stretches 230 metres (755 feet) into the sky. Afterwards, enjoy a relaxed lunch or dinner at one of Australia's greatest traditions, the Surf Life Saving Club (SLSC), or surf club. These buildings are found at many of Australia's beaches and are the home of Australia's famous lifesavers. Many of them have onsite restaurants. Try Rainbow Bay SLSC, which overlooks one of the coast's most famous beaches. Or head to Currumbin Beach Vikings SLSC, which is so close to the ocean that you're almost sitting on top of the waves. Both places serve up meals such as salt and pepper squid and the fisherman's basket, a selection of fresh, local seafood.

*Day 7: Sun, sand and surf*



The Village Markets, Burleigh Heads, Queensland © The Village Markets

There's so much to do in and around the Gold Coast that you could spend a week here and not be bored. But if you've only got a day you should hire a surfboard, kayak or stand-up paddle board from one of the many surf shops you'll find at most Gold Coast beaches. Alternatively, cool off in the [Currumbin Rock Pools](#), a free [natural swimming pool](#) in a mountain creek in the Currumbin Valley, a 15-minute drive from Currumbin Beach. If it's a weekend, visit one of the coast's many beachfront markets. [The Village Markets](#) at Burleigh Heads, on the first and third Sundays of the month, sell everything from emerging fashion and vintage treasures to art, jewellery, handmade skincare and home-cooked food. Tonight, you're catching an evening flight to [Cairns](#) and the [Great Barrier Reef](#).

*Day 8: Day trip to the reef*



Snorkelling, Great Barrier Reef, Port Douglas, Queensland © Tourism and Events Queensland

The city of tropical Cairns is your gateway to the northern stretches of the spectacular Great Barrier Reef, found just off the beaches here. Many tour operators depart from the city's shores and motor out to the reef (about 90 minutes away), for a full day of snorkelling or diving at one of the reef's many [coral cays and islands](#). If you've always wanted to try scuba diving this is a good place to do it, as there are lots of companies that offer introductory dive courses for underwater first-timers.



*Day 9: A rainforest adventure at Cape Tribulation*



Cape Tribulation, Daintree National Park, Queensland © Tourism and Events Queensland

Spend your second day in Cairns exploring the oldest rainforest in the world. The [Daintree](#) is one of the most diverse ecosystems on the planet and has survived more than 135 million years, earning it a World Heritage listing. Hire a car from Cairns city centre or airport and drive around three hours north to reach [Cape Tribulation](#), or join one of the many 4WD or coach tours from Cairns. However you decide to go, getting there via the Captain Cook Highway is half the fun. The road hugs the coastline for most of the way and the views are magnificent. When you arrive at the [Daintree Rainforest](#), don't miss Mossman Gorge, where a clear river tumbles over huge boulders in the middle of a butterfly-filled forest of palms and ferns. Learn about Aboriginal culture and traditional uses of the area's unique plants on a guided [Dreamtime Walk](#) from the [Mossman Gorge Centre](#). The rainforest meets the sea at Cape Tribulation, where you can wander through the forest and mangroves without getting your feet wet on one of the three boardwalks in Daintree National Park.

Day 10: Back to Bondi



Bondi Icebergs, Bondi Beach, Sydney, New South Wales © Destination NSW

Enjoy an early morning dip in the Lagoon, a huge, free, saltwater swimming pool on the [Cairns Esplanade](#), before flying back to spend your last day in [Sydney](#). Stretch your legs on the one-hour clifftop walk between [Bronte](#) and [Bondi Beach](#). It's Sydney's most famous coastal walk, with one spectacular view unfolding after another the entire way. It becomes the world's largest free outdoor sculpture gallery in October and November during the annual Sculpture by the Sea exhibition. In [winter](#) you might be lucky enough to see whales from the many clifftop vantage points along the way. Follow the trail all the way to [Bondi Icebergs](#), as famous for its scenic ocean pool, where hardy locals swim even in winter, as its fine dining clifftop restaurant overlooking the golden curve of Bondi Beach. It's one of Sydney's most iconic dining experiences, but head downstairs to the club bar and bistro, which serves food and drinks for half the price of the upmarket [Icebergs Dining Room](#) with exactly the same view. Now that's a bargain.

[Start planning](#)

Meriton Suites World Tower, Sydney

95 Liverpool Street, Sydney

Apartments, Hotels • Swimming Pool • 5 Stars

COVID Safe



From **AU\$285** to **AU\$2055**

Meriton Suites Pitt Street, Sydney

329 Pitt Street, Sydney

Apartments, Hotels • Swimming Pool • 5 Stars

COVID Safe

From **AU\$185** to **AU\$2155**

Meriton Suites Campbell Street, Sydney

6 Campbell Street, Haymarket

Apartments, Hotels • Swimming Pool • 5 St