

# Directory

## CONTENTS

Accommodation	448
Business Hours	450
Children	450
Climate Charts	451
Customs Regulations	452
Dangers & Annoyances	452
Discount Cards	453
Embassies & Consulates	454
Festivals & Events	454
Food	455
Gay & Lesbian Travellers	455
Holidays	455
Insurance	456
Internet Access	456
Legal Matters	456
Maps	456
Money	457
Photography & Video	457
Post	458
Solo Travellers	458
Telephone	458
Time	459
Tourist Information	459
Tours	460
Travellers with Disabilities	460
Visas	461
Women Travellers	461
Work	462

## ACCOMMODATION

Queensland is very well equipped with a wide range of accommodation options, with everything from the tent-pegged confines of camping grounds and the communal space of hostels to gourmet breakfasts in guesthouses

### BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at [www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels). You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

### PRACTICALITIES

- Videos use the PAL system.
- Plugs have angled pins: voltage is 220V to 240V; 50Hz.
- The *Courier-Mail* is Queensland's daily newspaper, the *Australian* is the national daily newspaper.
- The metric system is used for weights and measures.
- On free TV you'll watch the government-sponsored, ad-free ABC, multicultural SBS or one of three commercial stations – Seven, Nine and Ten.

and at-your-fingertips resorts, plus the gamut of hotel and motel lodgings.

The listings in the accommodation sections of this guidebook are in order of price. In larger towns and cities, the listings are arranged in budget, midrange and top-end categories. We generally treat any place that charges up to \$50 per single or \$100 per double as budget accommodation. Midrange facilities usually range from \$100 to \$160 per double, while the top-end tag is applied to places charging more than \$160 per double.

In most areas you'll find seasonal price variations. Over summer (December to February) and at other peak times, particularly school and public holidays, prices are usually at their highest, whereas outside these times useful discounts and lower walk-in rates can be found.

The weekend escape is a notion that figures prominently in the Australian psyche, meaning accommodation from Friday night through Sunday can be in greater demand (and pricier) in major holiday areas. For more information on climatic seasons and holiday periods, see p18.

Useful websites for last-minute or discounted accommodation:

- Lastminute.com** ([www.au.lastminute.com](http://www.au.lastminute.com))  
**Quickbeds.com** ([www.quickbeds.com.au](http://www.quickbeds.com.au))  
**Wotif.com** ([www.wotif.com.au](http://www.wotif.com.au))

## B&Bs

The local bed-and-breakfast (B&B) population is climbing rapidly and options include restored miners' cottages, converted barns, rambling old houses, upmarket country manors, beachside bungalows and simple bedrooms in family homes. Tariffs are typically in the \$80 to \$160 (per double) bracket, but can be much higher. Some places provide dinner as well as breakfast, and are called DBBs.

Local tourist offices can usually give you a list of options. For online information, try the following:

- babs.com.au** ([www.babs.com.au/01\\_qld/queensland.htm](http://www.babs.com.au/01_qld/queensland.htm))  
**Bed & Breakfast and Farmstay Association of Far North Queensland** ([www.bnbfnq.com.au](http://www.bnbfnq.com.au))  
**OZBedandBreakfast.com** ([www.ozbedandbreakfast.com](http://www.ozbedandbreakfast.com))

## Camping

Camping in the bush is for many people one of the highlights of a visit to Australia. The magnificent camping grounds in the state and national parks are a credit to the nation, and nocturnal visits from wildlife add to the bush experience. Permits are mandatory and can be purchased from **Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service** (QPWS; ☎ 13 13 04; [www.epa.qld.gov.au](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au)). You can book camp sites at some parks online, otherwise you'll need to telephone QPWS (note that all national-park campsites need to be booked in advance). The cost is \$4.50 per person per night, or \$18 per family. Some camping grounds fill up at holiday times, so you may need to book well ahead.

You can also pitch your tent in one of the hundreds of caravan parks that are scattered across Queensland; most have pools, toilets, laundry facilities, barbecues and camp kitchens. When it comes to urban camping, remember that most city camping grounds are miles away from the centre of town.

Unpowered sites for two people generally cost between \$16 and \$24, and powered sites cost \$18 to \$27. Many caravan parks also have on-site vans that you can rent for the night for around \$50, and self-contained cabins, which range from \$70 to \$120, depending on how motel-like the facilities are.

You should also note that it's illegal to stop overnight in a campervan anywhere that's not a designated camp site. Plenty of backpackers pull up by a beach or even in a Cairns carpark for example for a free night, and rangers or council people often hand out fines.

## Farm & Station Stays

Australia is a land of farms (known as 'stations' in the outback), and one of the best ways to come to grips with Australian life is to spend a few days on one. Many farms offer accommodation where you can just sit back and watch how it's done, while others like you to get more actively involved in the day-to-day activities.

Most accommodation is very comfortable – in the main homestead (B&B-style, many providing dinner on request) or in self-contained cottages on the property. Other farms provide budget options in outbuildings or former shearers' quarters.

Several farm-stays are included in this guidebook. **Queensland Farm & Country Tourism** (QFACT; [www.farmholidays.com.au](http://www.farmholidays.com.au)) produces a brochure called *Farm & Country Holidays*, which lists many of the places with accommodation – it's available from regional information offices.

## Hostels

Queensland has a staggering number of backpackers hostels, with standards ranging from the magnificent to the awful, depending on how they are run. Many are small, family-run places in converted wooden Queenslander houses. At the other end of the spectrum are the huge, custom-built places with hundreds of beds, extensive facilities and a party attitude.

Dorm beds typically cost \$19 to \$26, with singles hovering around \$45 and doubles costing \$60 to \$90.

Useful organisations:

**Nomads Backpackers** (☎ 9299 7710; [www.nomads.world.com](http://www.nomads.world.com)) Membership (\$34 for 12 months) entitles you to numerous discounts.

**VIP Backpacker Resorts** (☎ 07-3395 6111; [www.vipbackpackers.com](http://www.vipbackpackers.com)) Membership (\$43 for 12 months) entitles you to a \$1 discount on accommodation and a 5% to 15% discount on other products such as air and bus transport, tours and activities.

**YHA** (☎ 07-3236 1680; [www.yha.com.au](http://www.yha.com.au)) Membership (\$37 for 12 months) entitles you to discounts at YHA and many independent hostels.

A warning for Australian and Kiwi travellers: some hostels will only admit overseas backpackers, mainly because they've had problems with male locals sleeping over and bothering or harassing the backpackers. These hostels will ask to see your passport before checking

you in. Unfortunately some unscrupulous operators are taking advantage of this practice, charging exorbitant fees for services that Aussies know are a rip off. If you're suspicious of inflated prices at a backpackers, shop around. Also watch out for hostels that cater expressly to working backpackers, and where facilities are minimal but rent is high.

### Hotels & Motels

The top end of the hotel spectrum is well represented – in Brisbane, on the Gold Coast and in Cairns, at least. There are many excellent four- and five-star hotels and quite a few lesser places. They tend to have a pool, restaurant or café, room service and various other facilities. We quote 'rack rates' (official advertised rates) throughout this book, but often hotels and motels offer regular discounts and special deals.

For comfortable midrange accommodation that's available all over the state, motels (or motor inns) are the places to stay. Prices vary and there's rarely a cheaper rate for single rooms, so motels are better choices for couples or groups of three. You'll mostly pay between \$80 and \$150 for a room.

### Rental Accommodation

Holiday flats are extremely popular and prevalent in Queensland. Essentially apartments, they come with one or two bedrooms, kitchens, bathrooms and sometimes laundries. They're usually rented on a weekly basis – higher prices are often reserved for shorter stays. For a one-bedroom flat, expect to pay anywhere from \$90 to \$120 per night. The other alternative in major cities is to rent a serviced apartment.

If you're interested in a shared flat or house for a long-term stay, delve into the classified advertisements sections of the daily newspapers; Wednesday and Saturday are usually the best days. Notice boards in universities, hostels, bookshops and cafés are also good to check out.

### BUSINESS HOURS

Business hours are from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Most shops in Queensland are open on weekdays from around 8.30am or 9am until 5pm and on Saturday till noon or 5pm. Sunday trading is also becoming increasingly popular in the cities. Most of the larger towns and cities will have at least one night a week when the shops stay open until 9pm – usually

Thursday or Friday. Supermarkets are generally open till 8pm and sometimes for 24 hours. Local stores and convenience stores are also often open till late.

Banks open at 9.30am Monday to Friday and close at 4pm, except Friday, when they close at 5pm. Some large city branches are open from 8am till 6pm weekdays, and a few also open to 9pm on Friday. Post offices are generally open 9am to 5pm weekdays, and some open Saturday morning.

Restaurants typically open at noon for lunch and between 6pm and 7pm for dinner; most dinner bookings are made for 7.30pm or 8pm. Restaurants stay open until at least 9pm, but tend to serve food until later in the evening on Friday and Saturday. That said, the main restaurant strips in large cities keep longer hours throughout the week. Cafés tend to be all-day affairs, opening at 7am and closing around 5pm, unless they simply continue their business into the night. Pubs usually serve food from noon to 2pm and from 6pm to 8pm. Pubs and bars often open at lunchtime and continue well into the evening, particularly from Thursday to Saturday. For more dining information, see p44.

Keep in mind that nearly all attractions and shops are closed on Christmas Day and all attractions are closed on Easter Sunday.

### CHILDREN

Child- and family-friendly activities are listed throughout this guide in the destination chapters, and Brisbane has a section devoted specifically to kids (p86).

All cities and most major towns have centrally located public rooms where mothers (and sometimes fathers) can go to nurse their baby or change its nappy; check with the local tourist office or city council for details. While many Australians have a relaxed attitude about breast-feeding or nappy changing in public, others frown on it.

Many motels and the better-equipped caravan parks have playgrounds and swimming pools, and can supply cots and baby baths – motels may also have in-house children's videos and childminding services. Top-end hotels and many (but not all) midrange hotels are well versed in the needs of guests who have children. B&Bs, on the other hand, often market themselves as sanctuaries from all things child-related. Some cafés and restaurants make it difficult to dine with small children,

lacking a specialised children's menu, but many others do have kids' meals, or will provide small serves from the main menu. Some also supply highchairs.

If you want to leave Junior behind for a few hours, some of Australia's numerous licensed child-care agencies have places set aside for casual care. To find them, check under Baby Sitters and Child Care Centres in the *Yellow Pages* telephone book, or phone the local council for a list. See p86 for some useful websites. Licensed centres are subject to government regulation and usually adhere to high standards; to be on the safe side, avoid unlicensed ones.

Child concessions (and family rates) often apply for such things as accommodation, tours, admission fees and air, bus and train transport, with some discounts as high as 50% off the adult rate. However, the definition of 'child' can vary from under 12 to under 16 years. Accommodation concessions generally apply to children under 12 years sharing the same room as adults. On the major airlines, infants travel free provided they don't occupy a seat – child fares usually apply between the ages of two and 11 years.

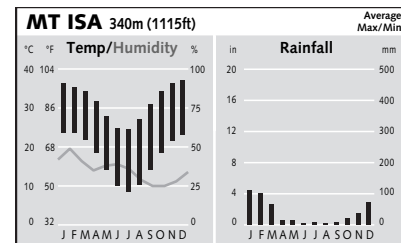
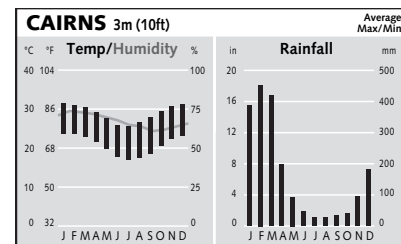
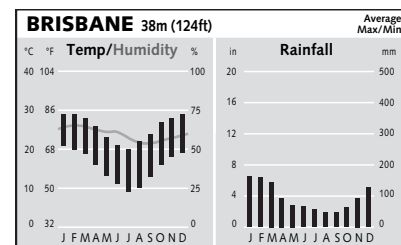
Medical services and facilities in Queensland are of a high standard, and items such as baby food, formula and disposable nappies are widely available in urban centres. Major hire-car companies will supply and fit booster seats for you, for which you'll be charged around \$20 for up to three days' use, with an additional daily fee for longer periods.

Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* contains plenty of useful information.

### CLIMATE CHARTS

Australian seasons are the opposite of those in Europe and North America: January is the height of summer and July the depth of winter.

The Queensland seasons are more a case of hotter and wetter, or cooler and drier, than of summer or winter. The tropic of Capricorn crosses Queensland a third of the way up, running through the city of Rockhampton and the outback town of Longreach. The state's northern two-thirds are within the tropics, but only the extreme north lies within the monsoon belt. Although the annual rainfall there looks adequate on paper, it comes in more or less one short, sharp burst.



November/December to April/May is the wetter, hotter half of the year, while the real Wet, particularly affecting northern coastal areas, is January to March. Cairns usually gets about 1300mm of rain in these three months; Tully, 100km south of Cairns, is the wettest place in Australia, receiving up to 4400mm of rain each year!

Summer is also the season for cyclones, and if one hits, the main road north (the Bruce Hwy) can be blocked by the ensuing floods.

By comparison, the southeastern and inland areas have relatively little rain – though they still have a wet season. Brisbane and Rockhampton both get about 450mm of rain from January to March. Further north, Mackay receives about 1250mm in these months, Townsville 850mm, Innisfail 1800mm and Weipa, on Cape York Peninsula, 1300mm. Just halfway across the southern part of the state, Cunnamulla receives only 400mm in the whole

year, while Birdsville, in the southwestern corner, receives the least rain, with only 150mm a year. In 2008 there was severe flooding in northern Queensland with many towns affected, including Mackay (see p264).

From about May to September (technically winter) it rarely gets anything like cold, except inland or upland at night. Temperatures in Brisbane peak somewhere between 20°C to 29°C just about every day of the year. In Cairns the daily maximum is usually between 25°C and 32°C, whereas around the Gulf, few days in the year fail to break the 30°C mark. Over at Birdsville you can expect 33°C or more every day from November to March, but rarely more than 20°C from June to August.

See p18 for more information on when to visit.

## CUSTOMS REGULATIONS

For comprehensive information on customs regulations, contact the **Australian Customs Service** (☎ 1300 363 263, 02-6275 6666; www.customs.gov.au).

When entering Australia you can bring most articles in free of duty provided that customs is satisfied they are for personal use and you'll be taking them with you when you leave. There's a duty-free quota of 2.25L of alcohol, 250 cigarettes and dutiable goods up to the value of \$900 per person.

When it comes to prohibited goods, there are a few things you should be particularly conscientious about. The first is drugs, which customs authorities are adept at sniffing out – unless you want to make a first-hand investigation of conditions in Australian jails, don't bring illegal drugs in with you. And note that all medicines must be declared.

The second is all food, plant material and animal products. You will be asked to declare on arrival all goods of animal or plant origin (wooden spoons, straw hats, the lot) and show them to a quarantine officer. The authorities are naturally keen to protect Australia's unique environment and important agricultural industries by preventing weeds, pests or diseases getting into the country – Australia has so far managed to escape many of the pests and diseases prevalent elsewhere in the world.

Weapons and firearms are either prohibited or require a permit and safety testing. Other restricted goods include products made from protected wildlife species (such as animal

skins, coral or ivory), unapproved telecommunications devices and live animals.

Australia takes quarantine very seriously. All luggage is screened or X-rayed and it's also likely to get a going-over by sniffer dogs. If you fail to declare quarantine items on arrival and are caught, you risk an on-the-spot fine of \$220, or prosecution, which may result in fines of more than \$60,000, as well as up to 10 years' imprisonment. For more information on quarantine regulations contact the **Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS)**; www.aqis.gov.au).

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

### Bushfires

Bushfires happen every year in Queensland. Don't be the mug who starts one. In hot, dry, windy weather, be extremely careful with any naked flame, and don't throw live cigarette butts out of car windows. On a day of total fire ban (listen to the radio, watch the billboards on country roads or front pages of daily newspapers) it is forbidden even to use a camping stove in the open. The locals will not be amused if they catch you breaking this particular law, and the legal penalties are severe.

If you're unfortunate enough to find yourself driving through a bushfire, stay inside your car and try to park off the road in an open space, away from trees, until the danger has passed. Lie on the floor under the dashboard, covering yourself with a wool blanket or protective clothing; this is important as it has been proved that heat radiation is the big killer in bushfire situations. The front of the fire should pass quickly, and you will be much safer than if you were out in the open. Bushwalkers should take local advice before setting out. On a day of total fire ban, don't go – delay your trip until the weather has changed. Chances are that it will be so unpleasantly hot and windy, you'll be better off in an air-conditioned pub sipping a cool beer.

If you're out in the bush and you see smoke, even at a great distance, take it seriously. Go to the nearest open space, downhill if possible. A forested ridge is the most dangerous place to be. Bushfires move very quickly and change direction with the wind.

### Critters That Bite & Sting

See p481 for information about bed bugs, ticks, leeches, mosquitos, marine creatures, snakes and spiders, as well as some methods for avoiding them.

## SWIM BETWEEN THE FLAGS

Drownings and swimming-related accidents have been hugely reduced by Queensland's beach-patrol programme. Patrolled beaches are indicated by red-and-yellow flags, one at each end of the patrolled area. Swimming conditions are indicated by single flags:

- green flag: safe to swim
- yellow flag: dangerous conditions
- red flag: beach closed, do not enter the water.

Swimming and surfing outside of patrolled areas is at your own risk. Blue signs around a swimming beach indicate that surfers are using the water beyond the red and yellow flags. In addition, there's an alarm you should listen out for, though it almost never sounds – the siren for a shark in the water.

If you get into trouble in the water, raise one arm above your head to catch the attention of the life-savers. If you happen to get caught in a rip (strong current) and are being taken out to sea, the first (and hardest) thing to do is not panic. Raise your arm until you have been spotted, and then swim parallel to the shore – *don't* try to swim back against the rip, you'll only tire yourself.

It's worth taking bed bugs seriously: one researcher on this book saw one poor girl who had bed bug bites all over her body from a place in northern Queensland. It was so bad she had to go to hospital.

## Swimming

Aside from the obvious – ie don't swim after drinking alcohol – there are a few special conditions in Australia to watch out for. See p480 for information about coral cuts, crocodiles, jellyfish, sharks and a few other marine nasties...and don't be alarmed; that list may sound scary, but only the most foolish of travellers would go all the way to Queensland then stay out of the sea!

## Theft

Queensland is a relatively safe place to visit, but it's better to play it safe and take reasonable precautions.

The Gold Coast is notorious for car crime, and more than a few travellers have lost all their belongings from locked vehicles in pub-

lic car parks. The golden rule is to never leave valuables in your car. A steering-wheel lock is also a worthwhile investment.

Most accommodation places have somewhere they can store your valuables, and you won't regret taking advantage of this service. It should go without saying, but don't leave hotel rooms unlocked.

If you are unlucky enough to have something stolen, immediately report all details to the nearest police station. If your credit cards, cash card or travellers cheques have been taken, notify your bank or the relevant company immediately.

## DISCOUNT CARDS

### Seniors Cards

Queensland is a popular retirement destination for Australian seniors, and things are generally well set up for senior travellers. Australian senior travellers with some form of identification are often eligible for concession prices. Overseas pensioners are entitled to discounts of at least 10% on most express bus fares and bus passes with Greyhound.

### Student & Youth Cards

The **International Student Travel Confederation (ISTC)** (www.istc.org) is an international collective of specialist student-travel organisations. It's also the body behind the internationally recognised International Student Identity Card (ISIC), which is only issued to full-time students aged 12 years and over, and gives the bearer discounts on accommodation,

## EMERGENCY

If you need the police, an ambulance or the fire department in an emergency, dial ☎ 000, ask the operator for the service you need and wait to be connected. This is a 24-hour service; your call is free and can be traced. To contact these services for nonemergencies, check regional phone books for local numbers.

transport and admission to various attractions. The ISTC also produces the International Youth Travel Card (IYTC or Go25), which is issued to people who are between 12 and 26 years of age and not full-time students, and has benefits equivalent to the ISIC. A similar ISTC brainchild is the International Teacher Identity Card (ITIC), available to teaching professionals.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Canberra is home to most foreign embassies, but many countries maintain consulates in Brisbane as well. If you need to apply for a visa for other countries, you will need to send your passport to Canberra by recorded delivery. Diplomatic missions in Brisbane:

**France** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 07-3229 8201; Level 10, AXA Bldg, 144 Edward St)

**Germany** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 07-3221 7819; 10 Eagle St)

**Japan** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 07-3221 5188; Level 17, Comcal Pl, 12 Creek St)

**Netherlands** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 07-3839 9644; Ground fl, 25 Mary St)

**UK** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 07-3223 3200; Level 26, 1 Eagle St)

It's important to realise what your own embassy – the embassy of the country of which you are a citizen – can and can't do to help you if you get into trouble. Generally speaking, it won't be much help in emergencies if the trouble you're in is even remotely your own fault. Remember that while in Australia you are bound by Australian laws. Your embassy will not be sympathetic if you end up in jail after committing a crime locally, even if your actions are legal in your own country.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Almost every community in Queensland has at least one annual festival of its own, and these are often unique and quirky celebrations. You might find anything from rodeos and bush race-meetings to cooee championships and cockroach races – and these festivals are a great way to meet the locals. Some of Queensland's major annual festivals and events include the following:

### January/February

**Australia Day** The nation celebrates the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788 on 26 January.

**Australian Skins** This big-money golf tournament is played over two days at Laguna Quays Resort on the Whitsunday Coast in February; see p278.

**Big Day Out** This huge open-air music concert tours Australia, stopping over for one day at the Gold Coast. It attracts big-name international acts and dozens of attention-seeking local bands and DJs. See p145.

**International Cricket** One-day internationals, Test matches and Pura Cup games are played at the Gabba in Brisbane.

### March/April

**Anzac Day** The nation commemorates the landing of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corp (Anzac) troops at Gallipoli in 1915 on 25 April. Veterans of both World Wars and the Korean and Vietnam Wars hold marches.

**Brisbane-to-Gladstone Yacht Race** Queensland's version of the Sydney-to-Hobart, held over Easter.

**Easter in the Country** Roma in the Darling Downs gears up for goat races, rodeos, country music and sausage sizzles galore. One big party! See p176 for more info.

**Surf Life-Saving Championships** Life-saving championships are held on the Gold Coast, including the classic Ironman and Ironwoman events. See p145.

### May/June

**Beef Australia** Held every three years in Rockhampton, over several days in May, this is a huge exposition of everything beefy. See p236.

**Brisbane Pride Festival** Brisbane's fabulously flamboyant gay and lesbian celebration, held in June. See p88.

**Cooktown Discovery Festival** A festival commemorating Captain Cook's landing in 1770 is held over the Queen's Birthday weekend. See p399.

**Outback Muster Drivers Reunion** This major festival is held in Longreach on the Labour Day weekend. See p438.

**Sorry Day** ([www.journeyofhealing.com](http://www.journeyofhealing.com)) Each year on 26 May, the anniversary of the tabling in 1997 of the *Bringing Them Home* report, concerned Australians acknowledge the continuing pain and suffering of indigenous people affected by Australia's one-time child-removal practices and policies. Events are held in most cities countrywide.

**Ten Days in the Towers** Charters Towers' major country-music festival, held over 10 days in May. See p316.

**Wintermoon Folk Festival** Several days of world music are enjoyed in Mackay. See p264.

### July

**Gold Coast International Marathon** Queensland's biggest event for distance runners; also includes some less-superhuman events. See p145.

**National Aboriginal & Islander Day Observance Committee (Naidoc) week** Indigenous art exhibitions and performances take place throughout Queensland during Naidoc week.

**Queensland Music Festival** This biennial (every odd-numbered year) festival features everything from jazz to

indigenous music, from Australia and all over the world. See p88.

### August

**Brisbane International Film Festival** The festival features films from Australia and the Asia Pacific region. See p88.

**'Ekka' Royal National Agricultural Show** Held at the RNA Showgrounds in Brisbane, this is Queensland's largest agricultural show. See p88.

**Hervey Bay Whale Festival** Held over a fortnight, it celebrates the annual migration of these magnificent creatures. See p222.

**Mt Isa Rodeo** This is one of the country's richest rodeos. See p432.

### September

**Birdsville Races** The country's premier outback horse-racing event is held on the first weekend in September. See p446.

**Brisbane Riverfestival** Brisbane's annual arts festival is held over two weeks in early September. See p89.

**Cairns Festival** Annual three-week festival celebrating regional culture. See p346.

**Carnival of Flowers** Toowoomba's gardens are on display for eight days, with a flower show, a parade and a Mardi Gras. See p164.

### October

**IndyCar** A four-day festival centred on the IndyCar Grand Prix car race around the barricaded streets of Surfers Paradise. See p145.

**Oktoberfests** Traditional beer-fests (with food, plenty of beer and live entertainment) for all ages are held in several towns in Queensland.

### November

**Melbourne Cup** Australia's premier horse race is run in Melbourne, Victoria, on the first Tuesday in November. The whole country shuts down for three minutes while the race is run.

### December

**Woodford Folk Festival** Formerly the Maleny Folk Festival, this huge folk festival is held over six days between 27 December and New Year's Day. See p185.

### FOOD

The innovative food offered in top-quality Australian eateries doesn't necessarily cost a fortune. Best value are the cafés, where a good meal in casual surroundings costs less than \$20 and a full cooked breakfast around \$12. Some pubs offer upmarket restaurant-style fare, but most pubs serve standard (often

large-portion) bistro meals, usually in the \$12 to \$22 range. Bar (or counter) meals, which are eaten in the public bar, usually cost between \$7 and \$12. For general opening hours, consider that breakfast is normally served between 6am and 11am, lunch starts around noon and runs until about 3pm and dinner usually starts after 6pm.

See p42 for more information about Queensland cuisine.

## GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Historically, Queensland has a poor reputation when it comes to acceptance of gays and lesbians. Homosexuality was only decriminalised in Queensland in 1991, after the fall of the right-wing National Party government.

Brisbane has an increasingly lively gay and lesbian scene centred on the inner-city suburbs of Spring Hill and Fortitude Valley, with quite a few nightclubs and pubs and a couple of guesthouses. See p102 for more information on gay and lesbian culture in Brisbane. There are also gay- and lesbian-only accommodation places in some of the more popular tourist centres, including Brisbane and Cairns. Elsewhere in Queensland, however, there's still a strong streak of homophobia, and violence against homosexuals is a risk, particularly in rural communities.

The website of **Gay & Lesbian Tourism Australia** ([GALTA](http://GALTA.com.au); [www.galta.com.au](http://www.galta.com.au)) is a good place to look for general information, though you need to become a member to receive the full benefits. **Pink Guide** ([www.pinkguide.com](http://www.pinkguide.com)) is another helpful website.

## HOLIDAYS

### Public Holidays

**New Year's Day** 1 January

**Australia Day** 26 January

**Labour Day** 1 March

**Easter** (Good Friday to Easter Monday inclusive) March/April

**Anzac Day** 25 April

**Queen's Birthday** 2nd Monday in June

**Royal National Show Day** mid-August, Brisbane only

**Christmas Day** 25 December

**Boxing Day** 26 December

### School Holidays

The Christmas holiday season (from mid-December to late January) is part of the long summer school vacation in Australia, and the time you are most likely to find accommodation

booked out and long queues at attractions. Easter is also a busy holiday time. There are three shorter school-holiday periods during the year that alternate slightly from year to year. Generally, they fall in mid-April, late June to mid-July, and late September to mid-October.

## INSURANCE

Don't underestimate the importance of a good travel-insurance policy that covers theft, loss and medical problems – nothing will ruin your holiday plans quicker than an accident, or having that brand-new digital camera stolen. There is a wide variety of policies available, so compare the small print.

Some policies specifically exclude designated 'dangerous activities' such as scuba diving, parasailing, bungee jumping, motorcycling, skiing and even bushwalking. If you plan on doing any of these things, make sure the policy you choose fully covers you for your activity of choice.

You may prefer a policy that pays doctors or hospitals directly rather than you having to pay on the spot and claim later. If you have to claim later, make sure you keep all documentation. Some policies ask you to call back (reverse charges or collect) to a centre in your home country, where an immediate assessment of your problem is made. Check that the policy covers ambulances and emergency medical evacuations by air.

See p477 for information on health insurance. For information on insurance matters relating to cars that are bought or rented, see p471.

## INTERNET ACCESS

Email and internet access is relatively easy in Queensland. Typical costs for casual use are \$2 to \$6 per hour. If you're staying in a hostel, chances are that internet access is provided on site, though you may have to wait in line to get online! Hostels, B&Bs and hotels offering guest terminals with internet access are identified in this book with an internet symbol (☒).

Most public libraries have internet access, but generally there is a limited number of terminals and you need to book in advance (although they are the best option for towns in the outback). You'll find internet cafés in cities, sizable towns and pretty much anywhere that travellers congregate.

Wireless access is becoming more common and widespread throughout the state, and es-

pecially in cities and large towns. Brisbane and Cairns for example have lots of wireless hotspots, though most require you to buy credit (with a credit card) before use and are more expensive than internet cafés. Quite a few hotels, motels and caravan parks offer wireless internet though it's usually a paid source along the same lines as a public hotspot – some are generous enough to offer their own service for free and a few offer 24 hour connection for around \$12 to \$15.

If you're bringing your own palmtop or notebook computer, check with your internet service provider (ISP) to find out if there are access numbers you can dial into. Be aware that your modem may not work once you leave your home country. The safest option is to buy a reputable 'global' modem before you leave home, or buy a local PC-card modem, if you're spending an extended time in any one country. For more information on travelling with a portable computer, see [www.teleadapt.com](http://www.teleadapt.com).

Australia primarily uses the RJ-45 telephone plugs, although you may see Telstra EX1-160 four-pin plugs; electronics shops such as Tandy and Dick Smith should be able to help. Most motel and hotel rooms have phone/modem sockets.

## LEGAL MATTERS

Most travellers will have no contact with the police or any other part of the legal system. Those who do are likely to do so while driving. There is a significant police presence on the roads, with the power to stop you and ask to see your licence (you're required to carry it), check your vehicle for road-worthiness, and to ask you to take a breath test for alcohol – needless to say, drink-driving offences are taken very seriously here.

First offenders caught with small amounts of illegal drugs are likely to receive a fine rather than go to jail, but the recording of a conviction against you may affect your visa status. Speaking of which, if you remain in Australia beyond the life of your visa, you will officially be an 'overstayer' and could face detention and expulsion, and then be prevented from returning to Australia for up to three years.

## MAPS

The Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (RACQ) publishes a good series of regional

road maps that show almost every drivable road in the state – these are free to RACQ members and to members of affiliated motoring organisations. There are also plenty of road maps published by the various oil companies. These are available from service stations.

Queensland's Department of Natural Resources and Mines produces the Sunmap series, which, together with commercial maps by companies including Hema, Gregory's and UBD, are available from most newsagents and many bookshops in Queensland. **World Wide Maps & Guides** (☎ 07-3221 4330; <http://worldwidemaps.com.au>; Shop 30, Anzac Sq, 267 Edward St, Brisbane) has one of the best selections of maps in the state.

For bushwalking and other activities that require large-scale maps, the topographic sheets put out by **Geoscience Australia** (☎ 1800 800 173; [www.ga.gov.au](http://www.ga.gov.au)) are the ones to get.

## MONEY

In this book, unless otherwise stated, all prices given in dollars refer to Australian dollars. Exchange rates are listed on the inside front cover. For an idea of the cost of travelling in Queensland, see p18.

## ATMs

ATMs are prominent throughout Queensland and are linked to international networks. They are an excellent way to procure local currency and avoid the hassle of carrying travellers cheques or large sums of cash.

## Cash

Australia's currency is the Australian dollar, made up of 100 cents. There are 5c, 10c, 20c, 50c, \$1 and \$2 coins, and \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 notes. Although the smallest coin in circulation is 5c, prices are often still marked in single cents and then rounded to the nearest 5c when you come to pay.

## Credit Cards

MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted. American Express is mostly limited to major towns and destinations.

The most flexible option is to carry both a credit card and an ATM or debit card; some banking institutions link the two to one card. You can use your debit card at most retail outlets and supermarkets, which carry Eftpos (Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale) facilities.

## TAX REFUNDS

If you purchase new or secondhand goods with a total minimum value of \$300 from any one supplier no more than 30 days before you leave Australia, you are entitled under the Tourist Refund Scheme (TRS) to a refund of any GST paid. The scheme only applies to goods you take with you as hand luggage or wear onto the plane or ship. Also note that the refund is valid for goods bought from more than one supplier, but only if at least \$300 is spent at each. For more information, contact the **Australian Customs Service** (☎ 1300 363 263, 02-6275 6666; [www.customs.gov.au](http://www.customs.gov.au)).

## Moneychangers

Changing foreign currency or travellers cheques is usually no problem at banks throughout Queensland, or at foreign exchange counters such as Travelex or Amex, which you'll find in the major cities.

## Tipping

See p47 for information on tipping etiquette in Queensland.

## Travellers Cheques

American Express, Thomas Cook and other well-known international brands of travellers cheques are all widely used in Australia. A passport will usually be adequate for identification; it would be sensible to also carry a driver's licence, credit cards or a plane ticket in case of problems.

Buying travellers cheques in Australian dollars is another option. These can be exchanged immediately at banks without being converted from a foreign currency or incurring commissions, fees and exchange-rate fluctuations.

Still, increasingly, international travellers simply withdraw cash from ATMs, enjoying the convenience and the usually good exchange rates.

## PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

There are plenty of camera shops in all of the big cities and standards of camera service are high. Digital cameras are all the rage and if you've forgotten yours, it'll be pretty easy to pick one up in Queensland. Video cassettes are also widely available at camera and electronics stores.

For the best results, try to take most of your photos early in the morning and late in the afternoon, when the light is softer. A polarising filter will help eliminate the glare if you're taking shots of the Great Barrier Reef or other water locations. Remember that heat, dust and humidity can all damage film; keep film dry and cool and process films promptly to guarantee results. For more information, see *Lonely Planet's Travel Photography: A Guide To Taking Better Pictures*.

Cheap disposable underwater cameras are widely available at most beach towns and resorts. These are OK for snapshots when snorkelling or shallow diving and can produce reasonable results in good conditions, but without a flash the colours will be washed out. These cameras won't work below about 5m because of the water pressure. If you're serious about underwater photography, good underwater cameras with flash units can be hired from many of the dive shops along the coast.

As in any country, politeness goes a long way when taking photographs; ask before taking pictures of people. Aborigines generally do not like to have their photographs taken, even from a distance.

## POST

Australia's postal services are efficient and reasonably cheap. Posting standard letters or postcards within the country costs 50c. **Australia Post** ([www.auspost.com.au](http://www.auspost.com.au)) has divided international destinations into two regions: Asia-Pacific and Rest of the World. Airmail letters up to 50g cost \$1.30 and \$1.95, respectively. Postcards (up to 20g) cost \$1.10. There are five international parcel zones and rates vary by distance and class of service.

All post offices will hold mail for visitors, and some city GPOs (main or general post offices) have very busy poste-restante sections. You need to provide some form of identification (such as a passport) to collect mail. See p450 for post-office opening times.

## SOLO TRAVELLERS

People travelling alone in Queensland face the unpredictability that is an inherent part of making contact with entire communities of strangers: sometimes you'll be completely ignored, and other times you'll be greeted with such enthusiasm it's as if you've been spontaneously adopted. Suffice to say that the

latter moments will likely become highlights of your trip.

People travelling solo are a common sight throughout Australia and there is certainly no stigma attached to lone visitors. However, in some places there can be an expectation that the visitor should engage in some way with the locals, particularly in rural pubs where keeping to yourself can prove harder than it sounds. Women travelling on their own should exercise caution when in less-populated areas, and will find that men can get annoyingly attentive in drinking establishments (with mining-town pubs arguably the nadir); see also p461.

## TELEPHONE

There are a number of providers offering various services. The three main players are the partly government-owned **Telstra** ([www.telstra.com.au](http://www.telstra.com.au)) and the fully private **Optus** ([www.optus.com.au](http://www.optus.com.au)) and **Primus Telecom** ([www.primus.com.au](http://www.primus.com.au)). These are also major players in the mobile (cell) market, along with **Vodafone** ([www.vodafone.com.au](http://www.vodafone.com.au)) – other mobile operators include **AAPT** ([www.aapt.com.au](http://www.aapt.com.au)), **Orange** ([www.orange.net.au](http://www.orange.net.au)) and **3** ([www.three.com.au](http://www.three.com.au)).

Numbers starting with ☎ 190 are usually recorded-information services, charged at anything from 35c to \$5 or more per minute (more from mobiles and payphones). To make a reverse-charge (collect) call from any public or private phone, simply dial ☎ 1800-REVERSE (1880 738 3773) or ☎ 12 550.

Toll-free numbers (prefix ☎ 1800) can be called free of charge from anywhere in the country, though they may not be accessible from certain areas or from mobile phones. Calls to numbers beginning with ☎ 13 or ☎ 1300 are charged at the rate of a local call – the numbers can usually be dialled Australia-wide, but may be applicable only to a specific state or STD district. Telephone numbers beginning with ☎ 1800, ☎ 13 or ☎ 1300 cannot be dialled from outside Australia.

Most payphones allow ISD (International Subscriber Dialling) calls, the cost and international dialling code of which will vary depending on which provider you're using. International calls from Australia are very cheap and subject to specials that reduce the rates even more, so it's worth shopping around.

## Mobile Phones

Local numbers with the prefixes ☎ 04xx or ☎ 04xxx belong to mobile phones. Australia's

two mobile networks – digital GSM and digital CDMA (be aware that CDMA is currently being phased out, however, and replaced with the Next Gen 3G network) – service more than 90% of the population but leave vast tracts of the country uncovered, including much of the Queensland outback. Brisbane and the towns lining the coast get good reception, but outside these centres it's haphazard or nonexistent.

Australia's digital network is compatible with GSM 900 and 1800 (used in Europe), but generally not with the systems used in the USA or Japan. It's easy and cheap enough to get connected short-term, though, as the main service providers (Telstra, Optus and Vodafone) all have prepaid mobile systems. Just buy a starter kit, which may include a phone or, if you have your own phone, a SIM card (around \$30) and a prepaid charge card. The calls tend to be a bit more expensive than with standard contracts, but there are no connection fees or line-rental charges and you can buy the recharge cards at convenience stores and newsagents. Don't forget to shop around between the three carriers as their products differ.

## Phone Codes

When calling overseas you need to dial the international access code from Australia (☎ 0011 or ☎ 0018), the country code and the area code (without the initial 0). So for a London number you'd dial ☎ 0011-44-171, then the number. Also, certain operators will have you dial a special code to access their service.

If dialling Queensland from overseas, the country code is ☎ 61 and you need to drop the 0 (zero) in the ☎ 07 area code.

Calls from private phones cost from 15c to 25c, while local calls from public phones cost 50c; both involve unlimited talk time. Calls to mobile phones attract higher rates and are timed. Blue phones or gold phones, which you sometimes find in hotel lobbies or other businesses, usually cost a minimum of 50c for a local call.

Although the whole of Queensland shares a single area code (☎ 07), once you call outside of the immediate area or town you are in, it is likely you are making a long-distance (STD) call. STD calls can be made from virtually any public phone and are cheaper during off-peak hours, which are generally between 7pm and

7am. There's a handful of main area codes for Australia:

State/Territory	Area code
ACT	☎ 02
NSW	☎ 02
NT	☎ 08
QLD	☎ 07
SA	☎ 08
TAS	☎ 03
VIC	☎ 03
WA	☎ 08

## Phonecards

There's a wide range of phonecards, which can be bought at newsagents and post offices for a fixed dollar value (usually \$10, \$20, \$30 etc) and can be used with any public or private phone by dialling a toll-free access number and then the PIN on the card. Call rates vary, so shop around. Some public phones also accept credit cards.

## TIME

Australia is divided into three time zones. Queensland is on Eastern Standard Time (as are New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania), which is 10 hours ahead of UTC (Greenwich Mean Time).

The other time zones in Australia are Central Standard Time (Northern Territory, South Australia), which is half an hour behind Eastern Standard Time; and Western Standard Time (Western Australia), which is two hours behind Eastern Standard Time.

When it is noon in Queensland it is 2am in London, 2pm in Auckland, 6pm the previous day in Los Angeles and 9pm the previous day in New York.

Lamentably, Queensland is on Eastern Standard Time all year, while most of the rest of Australia sensibly switches to daylight-saving time over the summer months. From roughly October through March, Queensland is one hour behind New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania. (But at least its curtains don't fade.)

## TOURIST INFORMATION

There is a large number of information sources available to visitors to Queensland, and you could easily drown yourself in brochures and booklets, maps and leaflets. Having said that, it's worth noting that most of the tourist information places are also booking agents, and will

steer you towards the tour that will pay them the best commission.

There are official tourist offices in just about every city and town in Queensland, staffed largely by friendly and knowledgeable volunteers.

The **Australian Tourist Commission** (ATC; ☎ 1300 361 650, 02-9360 1111; www.australia.com; Level 4, 80 William St, Woolloomooloo, 2011) is the national government body charged with improving foreign-tourist relations. A good place to start some pretrip research is the commission's website, which has information in nine languages (including French, German, Japanese and Spanish), quite a bit of it covering Queensland.

**Tourism Queensland** (☎ 13 88 33; www.queensland.holidays.com.au) is the government-run body responsible for promoting Queensland interstate and overseas. Its Queensland Travel offices act primarily as promotional and booking offices, not information centres, but are worth contacting when you're planning a trip to Queensland. Its website is well worth a browse, being stacked with information from accommodation options to diving the Great Barrier Reef

The Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service provides information on conservation areas throughout the state, including national parks, and is another useful body for travellers heading to Queensland. See the boxed text on p51 for contact details.

## TOURS

There are all sorts of tours around Queensland, although few that cover much of the state. Most are connected with a particular activity (eg bushwalking or horse riding) or area (eg 4WD tours to Cape York). There are also thousands of flyers in hostels and tourist-information offices.

Up in Far North Queensland, there are plenty of operators offering 4WD tours of Cape York Peninsula, often with the option of driving one way and flying or boating the other. See p406 for details.

There are many options for trips from the mainland out to the Great Barrier Reef (see p110). You can fly in a seaplane out to a deserted coral cay; take a fast catamaran to the outer reef and spend the day snorkelling; join a dive boat and scuba dive in a coral garden; or take a day trip to one of the many islands.

There are hundreds of tours operating out of Cairns (p343) and Port Douglas (p377). As well as trips to the Reef and islands, you

can take the Kuranda Scenic Railway up to the Kuranda markets; tour the Atherton Tablelands; visit Cape Tribulation on a 4WD tour; cruise along the Daintree River; go white-water rafting; and visit Aboriginal rock-art galleries in Cape York.

Tours of Fraser Island from Noosa (p194) and Hervey Bay (see the boxed text, p212) are a convenient way of seeing one of Queensland's natural wonders for those who don't have their own 4WD.

Dozens of operators in the Whitsundays (p264) offer cruises around the islands, and if you want to do your own thing, you can get a group together and charter a yacht.

From the Gold Coast (p155) there are tours to Lamington and Springbrook National Parks, and numerous tours run out of Brisbane to the Sunshine and Gold Coasts, and the lovely sand islands of Moreton Bay.

## TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Disability awareness in Australia is pretty high and getting higher. Legislation requires that new accommodation meet accessibility standards, and discrimination by tourism operators is illegal. Many of Australia's key attractions provide access for those with limited mobility, and a number of sites have also begun to address the needs of visitors with visual or aural impairments; contact attractions in advance to confirm the facilities available for people with disabilities. Tour operators with accessible vehicles operate from most capital cities. Travellers with disabilities with some form of identification are often eligible for concession prices.

There is a number of organisations that can supply information for travellers with disabilities visiting Queensland:

**Accessible Tourism Website** (www.australiaforall.com.au/QLD.html) Good site for tourists with disabilities to obtain accessibility information.

**Disability Information Awareness Line** (DIAL; ☎ 1800 177 120, TTY 07-3896 3471; www.disability.qld.gov.au/dial.cfm) Provides information on disability services and support throughout Queensland.

**National Disability Service** (☎ 07-3357 4188; www.nds.org.au/QLD/qldhome.htm; Suite 9, Level 4, Lutwyche City Shopping Centre, 543 Lutwyche Rd, Lutwyche) The national industry association for disability services; a good place to start for information.

**Spinal Injuries Association** (☎ 07-3391 2044; www.spinal.com.au; 109 Logan Rd, Woolloongabba) In Brisbane; another useful resource.

**Wheelee Easy** (☎ 07-4091 4876; www.wheeleeasy.com.au) This company runs specialised tours in the far north of Queensland for travellers with impaired mobility. Also has useful information about Cairns.

See p73 for more information.

## VISAS

All visitors to Australia need a visa. Only New Zealand nationals are exempt; they receive a 'special category' visa on arrival.

Visa application forms are available from Australian diplomatic missions overseas, travel agents and the website of the **Department of Immigration and Citizenship** (Map pp94-5; ☎ 13 18 81; www.immi.gov.au). There are several types of visa.

## Electronic Travel Authority

Many visitors can get an Electronic Travel Authority (ETA) through any travel agent or overseas airline registered by the International Air Transport Association (IATA). They make the application direct when you buy a ticket and issue the ETA, which replaces the usual visa stamped in your passport – it's common practice for travel agents to charge a fee for issuing an ETA (usually US\$15). This system is available to passport holders of some 33 countries, including the UK, the USA and Canada, most European and Scandinavian countries, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan and South Korea. You can also make an online ETA application at www.eta.immi.gov.au, where no fees apply.

## Tourist Visas

Short-term tourist visas have largely been replaced by the free ETA. However, if you are from a country not covered by the ETA, or you want to stay longer than three months, you'll need to apply for a visa. Standard visas (which cost \$75) allow one entry (or in some cases multiple entries) and stays of up to three months, and are valid for use within 12 months of issue. A long-stay tourist visa (also \$75) can allow a visit of up to a year.

## Visa Extensions

Visitors are allowed a maximum stay of 12 months, including extensions. Visa extensions are made through the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and it's best to apply at least two or three weeks before your visa expires. The application fee is about \$160 –

it's nonrefundable, even if your application is rejected.

## Working Holiday Maker Visas

Young, single visitors from Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK are eligible for a Working Holiday Maker (WHM) visa, which allows you to visit for up to 12 months and gain casual employment. WHM visa-holders can also apply for a second 12-month WHM visa if they have done at least three months seasonal harvest work in regional Australia. 'Young' is defined as between 18 and 30 years of age and visa holders are only supposed to work for any one employer for a maximum of three months. There is an application fee of \$190, and visas must be applied for only at Australian diplomatic missions abroad. For more information on the WHM, see www.immi.gov.au/e\_visa/visit.htm.

## WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Queensland is generally a safe place for women travellers, although it's probably best to avoid walking alone late at night in any of the major cities. Sexual harassment is rare, although the Aussie male culture does have its sexist elements. Don't tolerate any harassment or discrimination. Some women have reported problems at party hostels on the Gold Coast. With intoxicated men stumbling up from the bar, rural pub rooms are probably best avoided. If you're out on the town, always keep enough money aside for a taxi back to your accommodation. The same applies to outback and rural towns, where there are often a lot of unlit, semideserted streets between you and your temporary home. When the pubs and bars close and there are inebriated people roaming around, it's not a great time to be out and about. Lone women should also be wary of staying in basic pub accommodation unless it looks safe and well managed.

Sexual harassment is an ongoing problem, be it via an aggressive cosmopolitan male or a rural bloke living a less-than-enlightened bush existence. Stereotypically, the further you get from 'civilisation' (ie the big cities), the less aware your average Aussie male is probably going to be about women's issues. Having said that, many women travellers say that they have met the friendliest, most down-to-earth blokes in outback pubs and remote roadhouse

stops. And cities still have to put up with their unfortunate share of ocker males who regard a bit of sexual harassment as a right, and chauvinism as a desirable trait.

Lone female hitchers are tempting fate – while hitching with a male companion is safer, hitching is never entirely safe in any country in the world, and we don't recommend it.

## WORK

Several of the backpackers hostels in Brisbane have job boards with notices of available employment, while many of the bigger hostels have job clubs that aim to find work for guests. Telemarketing, door-to-door sales and table waiting are the most common jobs.

If you're in Brisbane and happy with bar work or waiting on tables, the best advice may be to go knocking on doors in Fortitude

Valley or New Farm. Many places want staff for longer than three months, though, so it may take a bit of footwork to find a willing employer. The *Courier-Mail* has a daily Situations Vacant listing – Wednesday and Saturday are the best days to look.

Harvest work is popular elsewhere in Queensland. The main hotspots are Bundaberg, Childers, Stanthorpe and Bowen, where everything from avocados to zucchini are harvested almost all year round, and hostels specialise in finding travellers work. The **National Harvest Labour Information Service** (☎ 1800 062 332; [www.jobsearch.gov.au/harvestrail](http://www.jobsearch.gov.au/harvestrail)) is a good source of information on where to pick up seasonal work.

Other useful websites:

**Australian Job Search** ([www.jobsearch.gov.au](http://www.jobsearch.gov.au))

**Career One** ([www.careerone.com.au](http://www.careerone.com.au))

**Seek** ([www.seek.com.au](http://www.seek.com.au))



# Transport

## CONTENTS

<b>Getting There &amp; Away</b>	<b>463</b>
Entering the Country	463
Air	463
Land	466
<b>Getting Around</b>	<b>467</b>
Air	467
Bicycle	467
Bus	468
Car & Motorcycle	469
Local Transport	474
Train	475

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Australia is a *long* way from Europe or America, and even a long-haul flight away from Asia, so be prepared for plenty of in-flight movies. All flights from Europe make a stop in Asia, usually in Bangkok, Hong Kong, Singapore or Kuala Lumpur; flying from the USA sometimes involves a stop on one of the Pacific islands. Flights into Australia are heavily booked during the European and US summer holidays and at Christmas time.

### ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Disembarkation in Australia is generally a straightforward affair, with only the usual customs declarations (p452) and the fight to be first at the luggage carousel to endure. If you're flying in with Qantas, Air New Zealand, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Japan Airlines or Singapore Airlines, ask the carrier about the 'express' passenger card, which will speed your way through customs.

### AIR International

Many international flights head to Sydney or Melbourne before they fly to Queensland, but Brisbane and Cairns receive direct international flights, and a few flights from New Zealand land at Coolangatta airport on the Gold Coast.

Because of Australia's size and diverse climate, any time of the year can prove busy for inbound tourists – if you plan to fly during a

### THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

particularly popular period (Christmas is notoriously popular), or on a particularly popular route (such as via Hong Kong, Bangkok or Singapore), make your arrangements well in advance.

### AIRLINES

**Air Canada** (airline code: ACA; ☎ 1300 655 767; www.aircanada.ca) Flies to Sydney.

**Air New Zealand** (airline code: ANZ; ☎ 13 24 76; www.airnz.com.au) Flies to Brisbane, Cairns, Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne.

**American Airlines** (airline code: AAL; ☎ 1800 673 486; www.aa.com) Flies to Brisbane, Cairns, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

**British Airways** (airline code: BAW; ☎ 1300 767 177; www.britishairways.com.au) Flies to all major Australian cities, including Brisbane and Cairns.

**Cathay Pacific** (airline code: CPA; ☎ 13 17 47; www.cathaypacific.com) Flies to Brisbane, Cairns, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

**Emirates** (airline code: UAE; ☎ 1300 303 777; www.emirates.com) Flies to Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.

**Freedom Air** (airline code: FOM; ☎ 1800 122 000; www.freedomair.com) Flies to Brisbane, Coolangatta, Sydney and Melbourne.

**Garuda Indonesia** (airline code: GIA; ☎ 1300 365 330; www.garuda-indonesia.com) Flies to Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide and Darwin.

**KLM** (airline code: KLM; ☎ 1300 392 192; www.klm.com.au) Flies to Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

**Malaysian Airlines** (airline code: MAS; ☎ 13 26 27; www.malaysiaairlines.com.au) Flies to Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

**Qantas** (airline code: QFA; ☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) Flies to all major Australian cities, including Brisbane and Cairns.

**Royal Brunei Airlines** (airline code: RBA; ☎ 1300 721 271; www.royalbruneiairlines.com.au) Flies to Brisbane, Sydney and Perth.

**Singapore Airlines** (airline code: SIA; ☎ 13 10 11; www.singaporeair.com.au) Flies to Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

**South African Airways** (airline code: SAA; ☎ 1800 221 699; ww2.flysaa.com) Flies to Perth and Sydney.

**Thai Airways International** (airline code: THA; ☎ 1300 651 960; www.thaiairways.com.au) Flies to Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.

**United Airlines** (airline code: UAL; ☎ 13 17 77; www.unitedairlines.com.au) Flies to Sydney and Melbourne.

## TICKETS

Be sure you research the options carefully so you get the best deal. The internet is an increasingly useful resource for checking airline prices.

Automated online ticket sales work well if you're doing a simple one-way or return trip on specified dates, but are no substitute for a travel agent with the low-down on special deals, strategies for avoiding stopovers and other useful advice.

Paying by credit card offers some protection if you unwittingly end up dealing with a rogue fly-by-night agency in your search for the cheapest fare. Most card issuers provide refunds if you can prove you didn't get what you paid for. Alternatively, buy a ticket from a bonded agent, such as one covered by the **Air Travel Organiser's Licence** (ATOL; www.atol.org.uk) scheme in the UK. If you have doubts about the service provider, at the very least call the airline and confirm that your booking has been made.

Round-the-world tickets can be a good option for getting to Australia.

For online bookings, start with a recommended website:

**Airbrokers** (www.airbrokers.com) US company specialising in cheap tickets.

**Cheap Flights** (www.cheapflights.com) Informative site with specials, airline information and flight searches from the USA and other regions.

**Cheapest Flights** (www.cheapestflights.co.uk) Cheap worldwide flights from the UK; get in early for bargains.

**Flight Centre International** (www.flightcentre.com) Respected operator handling direct flights, with sites for Australia, New Zealand, the UK, the USA and Canada.

**Opodo** (www.opodo.com) Reliable company with UK, German and French sites.

**Orbitz** (www.orbitz.com) Excellent site for web-only fares for US airlines.

**STA** (www.statravel.com) Prominent in international student travel, but you don't have to be a student; site linked to worldwide STA sites.

**Travel Online** (www.travelonline.co.nz) Good place to check worldwide flights from New Zealand.

**Travel.com.au** (www.travel.com.au) Probably one of the best Australian sites; look up fares and flights into and out of the country.

**Travelocity** (www.travelocity.com) US site that allows you to search fares (in US dollars) to and from practically anywhere.

**Roundtheworld.com** (www.roundtheworldflights.com) This excellent site allows you to build your own trips from the UK with up to six stops.

**Zuji** (www.zuji.com.au) Good Asia Pacific-based site.

## FROM ASIA

Most Asian countries offer fairly competitive air-fare deals, with Bangkok, Singapore and Hong Kong being the best places to shop for discount tickets.

Flights between Hong Kong and Australia are notoriously heavily booked. Flights to and from Bangkok and Singapore are often part of the longer Europe-to-Australia route so they are also sometimes full. The motto of the story is to plan your preferred itinerary well in advance.

There are several good local agents in Asia: **Hong Kong Student Travel Bureau** (☎ 2730 3269) In Hong Kong.

**Phoenix Services** (☎ 2722 7378) In Hong Kong.

**STA Travel** Bangkok (☎ 02 236 0262; www.statravel.co.th); Singapore (☎ 65 6737 7188; www.statravel.com.sg); Tokyo (☎ 03 5391 2922; www.statravel.co.jp)

## FROM CANADA

The air routes from Canada are similar to those from mainland USA, with most Vancouver and Toronto flights stopping in one US city such as Los Angeles or Honolulu before heading on to Australia. Air Canada flies from Vancouver to Sydney.

Canadian discount air-ticket sellers are known as consolidators and their fares tend to be about 10% higher than those sold in the USA. **Travel Cuts** (☎ 1866 246 9762; www.travelcuts.com) is Canada's national student travel agency with offices in major cities.

## FROM CONTINENTAL EUROPE

From the major destinations in Europe, most flights travel via one of the Asian capitals. Some flights are also routed through London

## CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

### Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motor travel generates CO<sub>2</sub> (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

### Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow jetsetters to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: lonelyplanet.com.

before arriving in Australia via Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong or Kuala Lumpur.

Some agents in Paris:

**Nouvelles Frontières** (☎ 08 25 00 07 47; www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr, in French) Also has branches outside of Paris.

**Odysia** (☎ 08 25 08 25 25; www.odysia.fr, in French) Student/youth specialists, with offices in many cities.

**Voyageurs du Monde** (☎ 08 92 23 56 56; www.vdm.com/vdm, in French) Has branches throughout France.

A good option in the Dutch travel industry is **Holland International** (☎ 0900-8858; www.hollandinternational.nl, in Dutch).

In Germany, good travel agencies include the Berlin branch of **STA Travel** (☎ 069 743 032 92; www.statravel.de) or **Adventure Travel** (www.adventure-holidays.com), which specialises in Australian travel.

## FROM NEW ZEALAND

Air New Zealand and Qantas operate a network of flights linking Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch in New Zealand with Brisbane and other Australian cities. Also look for foreign carriers such as Emirates, which offers reasonable fares.

Other trans-Tasman options:

**Flight Centre** (☎ 0800 243 544; www.flightcentre.co.nz) Has a large central office in Auckland and many branches throughout the country.

**House of Travel** (☎ 0800 367 468; www.houseoftravel.co.nz) Usually has good-priced fares.

**STA Travel** (☎ 0800 474 400; www.statravel.co.nz) Has offices in various cities.

## FROM SOUTH AFRICA

South African Airways and Qantas both fly from Johannesburg to Perth and Sydney, with connections to Brisbane. Some good South African-based travel agents:

**Flight Centre** (☎ 0860 400 727; www.flightcentre.co.za) South African wing of this international company, with offices throughout the country.

**Rennies Travel** (www.renniestravel.co.za) Reliable South African-based travel agent.

## FROM THE UK & IRELAND

There are two routes from the UK: the western route via the USA and the Pacific, and the eastern route via the Middle East and Asia. Flights are usually cheaper and more frequent on the latter. Some of the best deals around are with Emirates, Malaysia Airlines, Japan Airlines and Thai Airways International. Unless there are special deals on offer, British Airways, Singapore Airlines and Qantas generally have higher fares but may offer more direct routes.

Discount air travel is big business in London. Advertisements for many travel agencies appear in the travel pages of the

weekend broadsheet newspapers, in *Time Out*, the *Evening Standard* and the free magazine *TNT*. Good agencies in the UK:

**Flight Centre** (☎ 0870 499 0040; www.flightcentre.co.uk)  
**Omega Travel** (☎ 0844 493 8888; www.omegatravel.net)  
**STA Travel** (☎ 0871 2300 040; www.statravel.co.uk)  
**Traillfinders** (☎ 0845 058 5858; www.traillfinders.co.uk)

Typical direct fares from London to Brisbane are at their lowest during March to June. In September and mid-December fares go up by as much as 30%, while the rest of the year they're somewhere in between.

### FROM THE USA

Airlines linking Australia nonstop with Los Angeles or San Francisco include Qantas, Air New Zealand and United Airlines. Numerous airlines offer flights via Asia, with stopover possibilities including Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Hong Kong and Singapore; and via the Pacific with stopover possibilities like Nadi (Fiji), Rarotonga (Cook Islands), Tahiti (French Polynesia) and Auckland (New Zealand).

As in Canada, discount travel agents in the USA are known as consolidators. San Francisco is the ticket-consolidator capital of America, although some good deals can be found in Los Angeles, New York and other big cities.

Some companies arranging travel from the USA to Australia:

**STA Travel** (☎ 800 781 4040; www.statravel.com)  
 America's largest student travel organisation.  
**Travel Australia and New Zealand** (☎ 888 333 6607; www.aussie-experience.com)

### Domestic

The domestic airline industry now has more competition, with Tiger Air (a genuine budget carrier) joining the fray in 2007. There is more choice and far more accessible pricing in the domestic market than there was a few years ago. Few people pay full fare as the airlines continue to offer a wide range of discounts. These come and go and there are regular special fares, so keep your eyes open.

The following carriers fly to Queensland from other Australian states:

**Jetstar** (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com.au) Flies to Brisbane, Cairns, the Gold Coast, Mackay, Rockhampton, the Sunshine Coast, the Fraser Coast, Port Douglas, Townsville and the Whitsunday Coast from several major cities on the east coast, as well as Adelaide. Most flights involve a stopover.

**Qantas** (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) Flies to Brisbane, Cairns, the Gold Coast and Mt Isa from all capital cities and most of the smaller ones. Some flights involve a stop.

**QantasLink** (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) Flies from Sydney to Brisbane and Townsville.

**Tiger Airways** (☎ 03-9335 3033; www.tigerairways.com) Flies to the Gold Coast, Mackay, the Sunshine Coast and Rockhampton from Melbourne. Look for more Queensland destinations as this airline becomes established.

**Virgin Blue** (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au) Flies to Brisbane, Cairns, the Gold Coast, Mackay, Rockhampton, the Sunshine Coast, Townsville, the Whitsunday Coast and other Queensland coastal destinations from most capital cities.

There are also special deals available only to foreign visitors (in possession of an outbound ticket). If booked in Australia, these fares offer a 40% discount off a full-fare economy ticket. They can also be booked from overseas (which usually works out a bit cheaper). All airports and domestic flights are nonsmoking.

### LAND Border Crossings

Travelling overland to Queensland from elsewhere in Australia will really give you an impression of just how big this country is. The journey from Brisbane to the nearest state capital, Sydney, is a torturous 1030km, and the journey from Brisbane to Cairns, the next biggest city in Queensland, covers 1700km! To give you a sense of scale, Melbourne is 1735km away from Brisbane, Adelaide is 2130km distant, Perth is a mere 4390km away, and the shortest route to Darwin covers 3495km.

The Pacific Hwy is the main access point into Queensland from the south, crossing the border at Tweed Heads and Coolangatta (p152). It runs along the coast between Sydney and Brisbane and passes through a number of popular tourist spots and some great scenery. A lesser-used route from the south is the New England Hwy, which crosses the border at Tenterfield. It's a quieter, longer inland route from Sydney, and the road is the undisputed territory of road trains (a string of trailers pulled by a semitrailer), and kangaroos at night.

The Newell Hwy is the most direct route to Brisbane from Melbourne or Adelaide. It's a good road through the heart of rural New South Wales (NSW), crossing the border at Goondiwindi (p174), before becoming the Leichhardt and Gore Hwys.

The other major route into southern Queensland is the Mitchell Hwy. It crosses

the border at Barrington and links Bourke in outback NSW with Charleville (p441) in outback Queensland. In the state's far west, the Birdsville Track crosses the South Australian-Queensland border at Birdsville (p445). This road is in various stages of being paved but a 4WD is still recommended. For those wanting to travel further into the outback, have a look at Lonely Planet's *Outback Australia*.

The main road from the west is the Barkly Hwy, which crosses the Northern Territory-Queensland border around 15km west of Camooweal and cuts across to Mt Isa. From Mt Isa, you can continue eastward along the Flinders Hwy to Townsville on the coast, or head southeast along the Landsborough (Matilda) Hwy towards Brisbane.

See p469 for information on road rules, driving conditions and buying and renting vehicles.

## GETTING AROUND

### AIR

The state is well serviced by airlines, many of which are subsidiaries of Qantas. The following regional carriers access these locations from within Queensland:

**Aero Tropics** (☎ 1300 656 110; www.aero-tropics.com.au) Flies from Cairns to Horn Island and out to all the major Torres Strait islands.

**Jetstar** (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com.au) Flies between Brisbane and many coastal destinations, as well as Hamilton Island.

**Macair** (☎ 13 13 13; www.macair.com.au) Flies to Birdsville, Cairns, Charleville, Longreach, Mt Isa, Normanston, Toowoomba and Townsville, and many more outback locations and several locations in the Gulf Savannah.

**Qantas** (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) Flies to Brisbane, Cairns, Townsville and Mt Isa.

**QantasLink** (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) Flies to many outback and coastal towns not covered by Qantas or Jetstar.

**Skytrans** (☎ 1800 818 405, 07-4046 2462; www.skytrans.com.au) Flies between Cairns and Cooktown. Also flies to Townsville and destinations in the far north.

**Virgin Blue** (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au) Flies between Cairns, Townsville, the Whitsunday Coast, Mackay, Rockhampton, Hamilton Island, Brisbane and the Whitsunday Coast.

### BICYCLE

Queensland can be a good place for cycling, although you need to choose your areas.

There are bike tracks in most cities, but in the country they're variable. Roads such as the Bruce Hwy, from Brisbane to Cairns, can be long, hot and not particularly safe, as there are limited verges and heavy traffic. The humid weather can be draining too. The best areas for touring are probably the Gold Coast hinterland, the Sunshine Coast secondary roads and the area north of Cairns.

Bicycle helmets are compulsory, as are front and rear lights for night riding; you can receive an on-the-spot fine if you ignore these regulations.

Cycling has always been popular in Australia, and not only as a sport: some shearers would ride for huge distances between jobs rather than use less reliable horses. It's rare to find a reasonable-sized town that doesn't have a shop stocking at least basic bike parts.

If you're coming specifically to cycle, it makes sense to bring your own bike. Check with your airline for costs and the degree of dismantling/packing required. Within Australia you can load your bike onto a bus or train to skip the boring bits of road. Note that bus companies require you to dismantle your bike, and some don't guarantee that it will travel on the same bus as you. Trains are easier, but you should supervise the loading and, if possible, tie your bike upright, otherwise you may find that the guard has stacked crates of Holden spares on your fragile alloy wheels.

Many towns in the east were established as staging posts, a day's horse ride apart, which is pretty convenient if you want a pub meal and a bed at the end of a day's riding. Camping is another option, and it's usually warm enough that you won't need a bulky sleeping bag. You can get by with standard road maps, but as you'll probably want to avoid both the highways and the low-grade, unsealed roads, the government map series is best.

Remember that you need to maintain your body as well as your bike. Exercise is an appetite suppressant, so stock up on carbohydrates at regular intervals, even if you don't feel that hungry. Drink plenty of water: dehydration is no joke and can be life-threatening. Summer in Queensland isn't a great time for cycling. It can get very hot and incredibly humid, and it's no fun at all trying to ride through the torrential downpours that are commonplace during the Wet.

Of course, you don't have to follow the larger roads and visit towns. It's possible to fill

your mountain bike's panniers with muesli, head out into the mulga and not see anyone for weeks (or ever again – outback travel is very risky if not properly planned). Water is the main problem, and you can't rely on it being available where there aren't settlements, whatever your map may say.

Always check with locals if you're heading into remote areas, and notify the police if you're about to do something particularly adventurous. That said, you can't rely too much on local knowledge of road conditions – most people have no idea about what a heavily loaded touring bike is like to ride. What they think of as a great road may be pedal-deep in sand or bull dust, and cyclists have happily ridden along roads that were officially flooded out.

**Bicycle Queensland** (☎ 07-3844 1144; www.bq.org.au) is worth contacting for more information on cycling in Queensland. Additionally, the Queensland Department of Transport has an informative website, including road rules, maps and other resources. Click onto www.transport.qld.gov.au/cycling.

Some of the better bike shops can also be good sources of information on routes, suggested rides, tours and cycling events. For more information on seeing Australia from two wheels, check out Lonely Planet's *Cycling Australia*.

See p62 for more information about cycling in Queensland.

## Hire

It is possible to hire touring bikes and equipment from a few of the commercial touring organisations. You can also hire mountain bikes from bike shops in many cities, although these are usually for short-term hire (around \$20 a day).

## Purchase

If you want to buy a good steel-framed mountain bike that will be able to endure touring, you'll need to spend from \$500 up to \$1200. You'll also need to add equipment, including panniers, and a bike helmet, which can increase your expenditure to around \$1600.

Secondhand bikes are worth checking out in the cities, as are the post-Christmas sales and midyear stocktakes, when newish cycles can be heavily discounted.

Your best bet for reselling your bike is the **Trading Post** (☎ 1300 138 016; www.tradingpost.com

.au), which is distributed in newspaper form in urban centres around Australia, and which also has a busy online trading site.

## BUS

Queensland's bus network is a relatively cheap and reliable way to get around, though it requires planning if you intend to diverge too far from the coast. Most buses are equipped with air-con, toilets and videos, and all are smoke-free zones. The smallest towns eschew formal bus terminals for a single drop-off/pick-up point, usually outside a post office, a newsagent or a shop.

**Greyhound Australia** (☎ 13 14 99; www.greyhound.com.au) has the most extensive network in the state, servicing the coast from Coolangatta to Cairns, as well as heading inland to Toowoomba; it also has a route from Townsville to Mt Isa. The company also links up with interstate services to the Northern Territory (NT) and NSW.

There are also numerous smaller bus companies with more specialised local services, including **Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10; www.premiers.com.au). Premier is the main competitor to Greyhound on the Brisbane-to-Cairns route along the coast; it has fewer services per day and costs a few dollars less on most routes. Other operators:

**Brisbane Bus Lines** (☎ 07-3354 3633; www.brisbanebuslines.com.au) Services the Darling Downs area from Brisbane.

**Coachtrans** (☎ 07-3358 9700; www.coachtrans.com.au) Runs between Brisbane and Surfers Paradise or Coolangatta/Tweed Heads on the Gold Coast. Also services the Sunshine Coast.

**Coral Reef Coaches** (☎ 07-4098 2800; www.coralreefcoaches.com.au) Runs from Cairns to popular destinations on the way north to Cape Tribulation.

**Country Road Coachlines** (☎ 07-4045 2794; www.countryroadcoachlines.com.au) runs from Cairns to Cooktown on the inland (via Mareeba) and coastal (via Cape Tribulation) routes.

**Crisps Coaches** (☎ 07-3236 5266; www.crisps.com.au) Has extensive services throughout the Darling Downs area, with services from Brisbane to Warwick, Toowoomba, Goondiwindi, Stanthorpe and south to Tenterfield in NSW.

**Paradise Coaches of Rockhampton** (☎ 07-4933 1127) Runs from Rockhampton to Emerald and Longreach, and between Emerald and Mackay.

**Sun Palm Express** (☎ 07-4087 2900; www.sunpalmtransport.com) Operates services between Cairns, Port Douglas, Mossman and Cape Tribulation.

See the Getting There & Away and Getting Around sections in the destination chapters for fare information.

## Backpacker Buses

Several party tour buses operate along the coast, stopping at sights and pubs along the way and checking into big party hostels each night. These trips are economically priced and will get you from A to B, and can be more fun than conventional buses: the buses are usually smaller and you'll meet other travellers – but you may not see much of Aussie except through the bottom of a glass. **Oz Experience** (☎ 1300 300 028; www.ozexperience.com) is the main player. If you're more interested in the Outback, check out **Desert Venturer** (www.desertventurer.com) which does a three-day trip from Cairns to Alice Springs – popular with backpackers.

## Bus Passes

Greyhound offers passes that can save you a significant amount of money if bus travel is going to be your main mode of transport over a decent chunk of time (ie four or more weeks). Most involve interstate travel and attract a 10% discount for members of YHA, VIP, Nomads and other approved organisations, as well as card-carrying seniors/pensioners. The Kilometre Pass gives you go-anywhere flexibility, including the choice to backtrack if you want. Other useful passes for Queensland include the 'Mini Travellers Pass', which gives you 45 days to travel from Sydney to Cairns (\$350). There are also several passes that include outback destinations en route to the NT. Check its website for more details.

The Aussie Explorer Pass has a number of set routes that contain a slice of Queensland including: Reef and Rock (which takes in towns accessing the Great Barrier Reef such as Airlie Beach and Cairns as well as a piece of the Outback including Uluru and Kakadu for \$950 ex Cairns; valid 183 days) and the Central Coaster between Sydney and Brisbane (\$183; valid for 90 days)

Premier Motor Service also offers bus passes along the eastern coast, between Sydney and Cairns, which are slightly less expensive than Greyhound's.

## Costs

Following are the average, nondiscounted, one-way bus fares on some well-travelled routes through Queensland.

Route	Fare
Brisbane–Cairns	\$255
Brisbane–Hervey Bay	\$65
Hervey Bay–Rockhampton	\$80
Rockhampton–Mackay	\$60
Mackay–Airlie Beach	\$35
Airlie Beach–Townsville	\$60
Townsville–Cairns	\$60
Cairns–Mt Isa	\$210

## Reservations

Over summer, school holidays and public holidays, you should book well ahead on the more popular routes, including intercity and coastal services. At other times you should have few problems getting a seat on your preferred service. However if your long-term travel plans rely on catching a particular bus, book at least a day or two ahead just to be safe.

You should make a reservation at least a day in advance if you're using a Greyhound pass.

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Queensland is a big, sprawling state and among the locals driving is the accepted means of getting from A to B. More and more travellers are also finding it the best way to see the country. With three or four of you the costs are reasonable and the benefits many, provided, of course, that you don't have a major mechanical problem.

In fact, if you want to get off the beaten track – and in parts of Queensland the track is *very* beaten – then having your own transport is the only way to go, as many of the destinations covered in this book aren't accessible by public transport.

Motorcycles are another popular way of getting around. Between April and November the climate is just about ideal for biking around Queensland and you can bush camp just about anywhere. Bringing your own motorcycle into Australia will entail an expensive shipping exercise, valid registration in the country of origin and a *Carnet De Passages en Douane*. This is an internationally recognised customs document that allows the holder to import their vehicle without paying customs duty or taxes. To get one, apply to a motoring organisation/association in your home country. You'll also need a rider's licence and a helmet. The long, open roads are really made for large-capacity machines above 750cc, which



### CAMPING ON WHEELS

Once the preserve of grey nomads and round-Australia backpackers, campervanning has exploded in recent years and nowhere more so than in Queensland. The advantages are obvious: a self-contained home on wheels – transport, accommodation, usually cooking gear, and no mucking around with tents. It combines the freedom of camping with a level of comfort that's only limited by your budget – the biggest models are luxurious vehicles with toilets, showers, TVs and air-con.

Every town has at least one caravan park where you can find a site and plug into power. National parks usually have self-registration or prebook camp sites. There are also lots of off-track free camping options – with a good map and a bit of planning you can always find a secluded spot.

Campervans start with budget two-berth vans. Seating folds down to a double bed and there's generally room for a basic gas stove and hand-pump sink, but usually no fridge so storing food is a pain and they're too cramped for extended trips. Next up are pop-top or hi-top campervans that can sleep three or four, have a gas stove, a watertank, a fridge and plug into 240V power – economical and brilliant for a couple or a small family. From there you can go to a four- or five-berth motorhome. Lots of companies hire campervans, starting from less than \$50 a day for small campers, and up to \$200 a day for the big ones, with discounts for long-term rentals. Make sure it comes with tables and chairs, cooking equipment, bedding and preferably an awning for shade.

of the mainstream VW, Toyota, Mitsubishi or Nissan campervans. Life gets much simpler if you can get spare parts anywhere from Cairns to Cunnamulla.

When buying or selling a car in Queensland, the vehicle needs to be re-registered locally (ie with Queensland Transport) at the time of sale, for which the buyer and seller must complete a Vehicle Registration Transfer Application form, available from Queensland Transport or the RACQ (see the boxed text, p474). The seller will usually add the cost of any outstanding registration to the overall price of the vehicle. Before the vehicle can be offered for sale, the seller must also obtain a Safety Certificate from a Queensland Transport-approved vehicle-inspection station. Stamp duty has to be paid when you buy a car and, as this is based on the purchase price (3% for four-cylinder vehicles, 3.5% for six-cylinder vehicles and 4% for V8s), it's not unknown for buyer and seller to agree privately to understate the price. It's much easier to sell a car in the state in which it's registered, otherwise the buyer will eventually have to re-register it in the new state. See p471 for information on vehicle insurance.

Shopping around for a used car involves the same rules as anywhere in the Western world. Used-car dealers in Australia are of the same mercenary breed they are everywhere else. You'll probably get a car cheaper by buying through the newspaper classifieds

rather than through a dealer. Among other things, dealers are not required to give you any warranty when you buy a car in Queensland, regardless of cost.

### BUY-BACK DEALS

One way of getting around the hassles of buying and selling a vehicle privately is to enter into a buy-back arrangement with a car or motorcycle dealer. However, many dealers will find ways of knocking down the price when you return the vehicle – even if a price has been agreed in writing – often by pointing out spurious repairs that allegedly will be required to gain the dreaded Safety Certificate. The cars on offer have often been driven around Australia a number of times, often with haphazard or minimal servicing, and are generally pretty tired. The main advantage of these schemes is that you don't have to worry about being able to sell the vehicle quickly at the end of your trip.

### Road Conditions

Australia doesn't have the traffic volume to justify multilane highways, so most of the country relies on single-lane roads, which can be pretty frustrating if you're stuck behind a slow-moving caravan. Passing areas are usually only found on uphill sections or steep descents, so you may have to wait a long time for an opportunity to pass.

There are a few sections of divided road, most notably on the Surfers Paradise-Brisbane

road. Main roads are well surfaced (though a long way from the billiard-table surfaces the Poms are used to driving on) and have regular resting places and petrol stations.

You don't have to get very far off the beaten track to find yourself on dirt roads, though most are quite well maintained. A few useful spare parts are worth carrying – a broken fan belt can be a damn nuisance if the next service station is 200km away. Also look out for the hybrid dirt road: a single, bidirectional strip of tarmac with dirt verges. It's okay to drive down the central strip but be ready to pull into the verges to pass oncoming traffic.

Between cities, signposting on the main highways is generally OK, but once you hit the back roads you'll need a good map – see p456 for suggestions.

Cows, sheep and kangaroos are common hazards on country roads, and a collision is likely to kill the animal and seriously damage your vehicle.

Flooding can occur with little warning, especially in outback areas and the tropical north. Roads can be cut off for days during floods, and floodwaters sometimes wash away whole sections of road.

### Road Hazards

The roadkill that you unfortunately see a lot of in the outback is mostly the result of cars and trucks hitting animals during the night. Many Australians avoid travelling altogether once the sun drops because of the risks posed by animals on the roads.

Kangaroos are common hazards on country roads, as are cows and sheep in the unfenced outback – hitting an animal of this size can make a real mess of your car and result in human casualties, depending on the speed at which you're travelling. Kangaroos are most active around dawn and dusk. They often travel in groups, so if you see one hopping across the road in front of you, slow right down, as its friends may be just behind it.

If you're travelling at night and an animal appears in front of you, hit the brakes, dip your lights (so you don't dazzle and confuse it) and only swerve if it's safe to do so – numerous travellers have been killed in accidents caused by swerving to miss animals.

A not-so-obvious hazard is driver fatigue. Driving long distances (particularly in hot weather) can be so tiring that you might fall asleep at the wheel – it's not uncommon and

the consequences can be unthinkable. So on a long haul, stop and rest every two hours or so – do some exercise, change drivers or have a coffee.

Motorcyclists need to beware of dehydration in the dry, hot air. Force yourself to drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty, and *never* ride at night: a road train can hit a kangaroo without stopping, but a motorcycle has no chance. Make sure you carry water – at least 2L on major roads in central Australia, more off the beaten track. And finally, if something does go hopelessly wrong in the back of beyond, park your bike where it's clearly visible and observe the cardinal rule – *don't leave your vehicle*.

### Road Rules

Australians drive on the left-hand side of the road just like in the UK, Japan and most countries in South and East Asia and the Pacific.

There are a few variations to the rules of the road as applied elsewhere. The main one is the 'give way to the right' rule. This means that if you approach an unmarked intersection, traffic on your right has right of way. Most places do have marked intersections; Mt Isa doesn't!

The speed limit in towns and built-up areas is 50km/h or 60km/h, sometimes rising to 80km/h on the outskirts and dropping to 40km/h in residential areas and around schools. On the highway it's usually 100km/h or 110km/h, depending on the area.

The police have radar speed traps and speed cameras, and are fond of using them. When you're far from the cities and traffic is light, you'll see many vehicles moving a lot faster than 100km/h. Oncoming drivers who flash their lights at you may be giving you a friendly indication of a speed trap ahead (it's illegal to do so, by the way).

Wearing seat belts is compulsory, and small children must be restrained in an approved safety seat. Drink-driving is a real problem, especially in country areas. Serious attempts to reduce the resulting road toll are ongoing and random breath-tests are not uncommon in built-up areas. If you're caught with a blood-alcohol level of more than 0.05%, be prepared for a hefty fine and the loss of your licence.

### Outback Travel

If you really want to see outback Queensland, there are lots of roads where the official recommendation is that you report to the police

**RACQ**

It's well worth joining the **Royal Automobile Club of Queensland** (RACQ; ☎ 13 19 05; www.racq.com.au); it offers emergency breakdown cover for \$95 per year, which will get you prompt roadside assistance and organise a tow to a reputable garage if the problem can't be fixed on the spot. Membership of the RACQ gives reciprocal cover with the automobile associations in other states, and with similar organisations overseas, for example the AAA in the USA or the RAC or AA in the UK. Bring proof of membership with you.

The RACQ also produces a particularly useful set of regional maps of Queensland, which are free to members. Its offices sell a wide range of travel and driving products, including good maps and travel guidebooks; book tours and accommodation; and provide advice on weather and road conditions. It can arrange additional insurance on top of your compulsory third-party personal liability cover, and give general guidelines about buying a car. Most importantly, for a fee (from \$150) it will check over a used car and report on its condition before you agree to purchase it.

There are offices all around the state and almost every town has a garage affiliated with the RACQ – see the information sections of the individual destinations for details.

before you leave one end, and again when you arrive at the other. That way if you fail to turn up at your destination, the police can send out search parties.

Many of these roads can be attempted confidently in a conventional car, but you do need to be carefully prepared and to carry important spare parts. Backtracking 500km to pick up a replacement for some minor malfunctioning component or, much worse, to arrange a tow, is unlikely to be easy or cheap.

When travelling to really remote areas it's advisable to travel with a high-frequency out-post radio transmitter that is equipped to pick up the Royal Flying Doctor Service bases in the area.

You will, of course, need to carry a fair amount of water in case of disaster (around 20L a person is sensible) stored in more than one container. Food is less important – the space might be better allocated to an extra spare tyre or spare fuel.

The RACQ can advise on preparation and supply maps and track notes. See p21 for recommended literature that covers outback travel.

Most tracks have an ideal time of year – in Queensland's southwest, it's not wise to attempt the tough tracks during the heat of summer (November to March), when the dust can be severe, the chances of mechanical trouble much greater and water scarce. Similarly, in the north travelling in the wet season may be impossible because of flooding and mud. You should always seek advice on road conditions when you're travelling into unfamiliar territory. The local police will be able to advise

you whether roads are open and whether your vehicle is suitable for a particular track.

The RACQ has a 24-hour telephone service with a prerecorded report on road conditions throughout the state – dial ☎ 1300 130 595. For more specific local information, you can call into the nearest RACQ office; these are listed in the information sections throughout this book.

If you do run into trouble in the back of beyond, *stay with your car*. It's easier to spot a car than a human being from the air and plenty of travellers have wandered off into the wilderness and died of thirst long after their abandoned car was found!

## LOCAL TRANSPORT Bus & Train

Brisbane has a comprehensive public transport system with buses, trains and river ferries. The **Trans-Info Service** (☎ 13 12 30; www.transinfo.qld.gov.au; ☎ 6am-10pm) provides schedule information for Brisbane, the Sunshine and Gold Coasts and for parts of the Darling Downs.

Larger cities such as Surfers Paradise, Toowoomba, Mt Isa, Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville and Cairns all have local bus services. There are also local services throughout the Gold and Sunshine Coasts.

At the major tourist centres, most of the backpackers hostels and some resorts and hotels have courtesy coaches that will pick you up from train or bus stations or the airport. Most tour operators include in their prices courtesy coach transport to/from your accommodation. Elsewhere, all of the larger towns and cities have at least one taxi service.

**Taxi**

Brisbane has plenty of taxis, and it's not hard to hail a cab in Cairns, but outside of these two cities their numbers are far fewer. That doesn't mean they aren't there – even small towns often have at least one taxi. An almost nationwide contact number is ☎ 13 10 08; alternatively you can find numbers for taxis in a local phone book or at the tourist office. Taxi fares vary throughout the state, but shouldn't differ much from those in Brisbane.

**TRAIN**

Queensland has a good rail network that services the coast between Brisbane and Cairns, with several routes heading inland to Mt Isa, Longreach and Charleville. There are seven services in total, including the Kuranda Scenic Railway, which is primarily a tourist route in northern Queensland. All services are operated by Travel Train (www.traveltrain.com.au), a wing of **Queensland Rail** (QR; ☎ 1300 131 722; www.qr.com.au).

NSW's **CountryLink** (☎ 13 22 32; www.countrylink.nsw.gov.au) has a daily XPT (express passenger train) service between Brisbane and Sydney. The northbound service runs overnight, while the southbound service runs during the day (economy seat/1st-class seat \$92/130, 15 hours).

**Classes & Costs**

Travelling by rail within Queensland is generally slower and more expensive than bus travel, although some of the economy fares are comparable to bus fares. The trains are almost all air-con and you can get sleeping berths on most trains for around \$50 extra a night in economy, and approximately \$170 in 1st class. The *Sunlander*, which runs from Brisbane to Cairns, also has the exclusive 'Queenslander Class', which includes comfortable berths, meals in the swanky restaurant car and historical commentary along the way.

You can break your journey on the *Tilt Train* service between Brisbane and Cairns by utilising a stopover fare, whereby you pay slightly extra for up to four stops within a period of 28 days.

Half-price concession fares are available to kids under 16 years of age and students with an International Student Identity Card (ISIC). There are also discounts for seniors and pensioners.

**Reservations**

There are Queensland Rail Travel Centres throughout the state – these are basically booking offices that can advise you on all rail travel, sell you tickets and put together rail-holiday packages that include transport and accommodation:

**Brisbane** Central Station (☎ 07-3235 1323; Ground fl, Central Station, 305 Edward St); Roma St Transit Centre (☎ 07-3235 1331; Roma St)

**Cairns** (☎ 07-4036 9250; Cairns train station, Bunda St)

**Rockhampton** (☎ 07-4932 0242; Rockhampton train station, Murray St)

**Townsville** (☎ 07-4772 8358; Townsville train station, Flinders St)

You can also purchase train tickets through travel agencies. Telephone reservations can be made through one of the Queensland Rail Travel Centres or through Queensland Rail's centralised booking service from anywhere in Australia. For more information visit the QR website.

**Train Services****GULFLANDER**

The *Gulflander* is a strange, snub-nosed little train that travels once a week between the remote Gulf towns of Normanton and Croydon – it's a unique and memorable journey. See p417 for details.

**INLANDER**

The *Inlander* does what its name suggests, covering the route from Townsville to Mt Isa twice weekly, leaving Townsville on Sunday and Thursday afternoons and Mt Isa on Monday and Friday afternoons (economy seat/economy sleeper/1st-class sleeper \$125/185/280, 20 hours).

**KURANDA SCENIC RAILWAY**

One of the most popular tourist trips out of Cairns is the Kuranda Scenic Railway – a spectacular 1½-hour trip on a historic steam train through the rainforests west of Cairns. See p363 for details.

**SAVANNAHLANDER**

A classic 1960 train, the *Savannahlander* travels between Cairns (departs Wednesday) and Forsyth (departs Friday). It coasts up the scenic Kuranda Railway and into the outback. The journey costs \$220/330 for a single/round-trip.

**SPIRIT OF THE OUTBACK**

The *Spirit of the Outback* travels the 1326km between Brisbane and Longreach (economy seat/economy sleeper/1st-class sleeper \$185/245/375, 24 hours) via Rockhampton (\$105/165/255, 10½ hours) twice a week, leaving Brisbane on Tuesday and Saturday evenings and returning from Longreach on Monday and Thursday mornings. A connecting bus service operates between Longreach and Winton.

**SUNLANDER**

The *Sunlander* travels between Brisbane and Cairns three times a week, leaving Brisbane on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday mornings and leaving Cairns on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings (economy seat/economy sleeper/1st-class sleeper/Queenslander-class \$215/270/415/760, 30 hours).

**TILT TRAIN**

The *Tilt Train*, a high-speed economy and business train, makes the trip from Brisbane to Rockhampton (economy/business seat

\$105/155) in just over seven hours, leaving Brisbane at 11am from Sunday to Friday. There is also an evening train at 5pm on Friday and Sunday (from Monday to Thursday the 5pm train only runs as far as Bundaberg). In economy/business the one-way fare is \$70/100 to Bundaberg.

The *Tilt Train* also operates a service between Brisbane and Cairns (business seat \$310, 25 hours) leaving Brisbane at 6.25pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and Cairns at 9.15am on Sunday, Wednesday and Friday. Economy seats are only available from Brisbane to Rockhampton (\$105, eight hours).

**WESTLANDER**

The *Westlander* heads inland from Brisbane to Charleville every Tuesday and Thursday evening, returning from Charleville to Brisbane on Wednesday and Friday evenings (economy seat/economy sleeper/1st-class sleeper \$105/160/245, 16 hours). From Charleville there are connecting bus services to Cunnamulla and Quilpie.



# Health

Dr David Millar

## CONTENTS

<b>Before You Go</b>	<b>477</b>
Insurance	477
Recommended Vaccinations	477
Medical Checklist	477
Internet Resources	478
Further Reading	478
<b>In Transit</b>	<b>478</b>
Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)	478
Jet Lag & Motion Sickness	478
<b>In Queensland</b>	<b>478</b>
Availability & Cost of Health Care	478
Infectious Diseases	479
Environmental Hazards	480
Cuts, Bites & Stings	481

Australia is a remarkably healthy country in which to travel, considering that such a large portion of it lies in the tropics. Tropical diseases such as malaria and yellow fever are unknown, diseases of insanitation such as cholera and typhoid are unheard of, and, thanks to Australia's isolation and quarantine standards, even some animal diseases such as rabies and foot-and-mouth disease have yet to be recorded.

Few travellers to Queensland should experience anything worse than an upset stomach or a bad hangover, and if you do fall ill, the standard of hospitals and health care is high.

## BEFORE YOU GO

Since most vaccines don't produce immunity until at least two weeks after they're given, you should visit a physician four to eight weeks before your departure. Ask your doctor for an International Certificate of Vaccination (otherwise known as the yellow booklet), which will list all the vaccinations you've received. This certificate is mandatory for countries that require proof of yellow-fever vaccination upon entry (and is sometimes required in Australia, see right), but it's a good idea to carry it wherever you travel.

Bring medications in their original, clearly labelled containers. A signed and dated letter

from your physician describing your medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

## INSURANCE

Health insurance is essential for all travellers. While health care in Queensland is of a high standard and not overly expensive by international standards, considerable costs can build up if you require medical care, and repatriation is extremely expensive. If your health insurance doesn't cover you for medical expenses abroad, consider purchasing some extra insurance; check [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com) for more information. Find out in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures. See p478 for details of health care in Queensland.

## RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

Proof of yellow-fever vaccination is required only from travellers entering Australia within six days of having stayed overnight or longer in a yellow-fever-infected country. For a full list of these countries, visit the website of the **World Health Organization** (WHO; [www.who.int/wer](http://www.who.int/wer)) or that of the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (CDC; [wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx](http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx)).

If you're really worried about your health when travelling, there are a few vaccinations you could consider organising for your trip to Australia. The WHO recommends that all travellers should be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella, chickenpox and polio, as well as hepatitis B, regardless of their destination. Planning a trip is a great time to ensure that all of your routine vaccination cover is complete and up to date. The consequences of these diseases can be severe and while Australia has high levels of childhood-vaccination coverage, outbreaks of these diseases do occur.

## MEDICAL CHECKLIST

For those who are *really* paranoid about health while travelling...

- antibiotics
- anti-diarrhoeal drugs (eg loperamide)
- acetaminophen/paracetamol or aspirin
- anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)
- antihistamines (for hay fever and allergic reactions)
- antibacterial ointment to apply to cuts and abrasions
- steroid cream or cortisone (for poison ivy and other allergic rashes)
- bandages, gauze, gauze rolls
- adhesive or paper tape
- scissors, safety pins, tweezers
- thermometer
- pocketknife
- DEET-containing insect repellent for the skin
- permethrin-containing insect spray for clothing, tents and bed nets
- sun block
- oral rehydration salts
- iodine tablets or water filter (for water purification)

## INTERNET RESOURCES

There is a wealth of travel health advice on the internet. For further information, **Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)) is a good place to start. The **WHO** ([www.who.int/ith](http://www.who.int/ith)) publishes a superb book called *International Travel & Health*, which is revised annually and is available online at no cost. Another website of general interest is **MD Travel Health** ([www.mdtravelhealth.com](http://www.mdtravelhealth.com)), which provides complete travel-health recommendations for every country and is updated daily.

## FURTHER READING

Lonely Planet's *Healthy Travel Australia*, *New Zealand & the Pacific* is a handy, pocket-sized guide packed with useful information including pretrip planning, emergency first aid, immunisation and disease information and what

### TRAVEL-HEALTH WEBSITES

It's usually a good idea to consult your government's travel-health website before departure, if one is available:

**Australia** [www.dfat.gov.au/travel](http://www.dfat.gov.au/travel)

**Canada** [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/index-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/index-eng.php)

**UK** [www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/Healthadvice/fortravellers/index.htm](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/Healthadvice/fortravellers/index.htm)

**United States** [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

to do if you get sick on the road. *Travel with Children*, from Lonely Planet, also includes advice on travel health for younger children.

## IN TRANSIT

### DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Blood clots may form in the legs (deep vein thrombosis) during plane flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility. The longer the flight, the greater the risk. Though most blood clots are reabsorbed uneventfully, some may break off and travel through the blood vessels to the lungs, where they could cause life-threatening complications.

The chief symptom of deep vein thrombosis is swelling or pain of the foot, the ankle or the calf, usually – but not always – on just one leg. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and breathing difficulties. Travellers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To prevent the development of deep vein thrombosis on long flights, walk around the cabin, perform isometric compressions of the leg muscles (ie flex the leg muscles while sitting), drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol and tobacco.

### JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS

Jet lag is common when crossing more than five time zones, and results in insomnia, fatigue, malaise or nausea. To avoid jet lag, try drinking plenty of (nonalcoholic) fluids and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep etc) as soon as possible. Antihistamines such as dimenhydrinate and meclizine are usually the first choice for treating motion sickness. Their main side-effect is drowsiness. A herbal alternative is ginger, which works like a charm for some people.

## IN QUEENSLAND

### AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Australia has an excellent health-care system, with a mixture of privately run medical clinics and hospitals, and a system of government-funded public hospitals. Medicare covers Australian residents for some health-care costs. Visitors from countries with which Australia has a reciprocal health-care agreement (New

Zealand, the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Italy, Malta and Ireland) are eligible for benefits to the extent specified under the Medicare programme. If you are from one of these countries, check the details before departure. In general, the agreements provide for any episode of ill-health that requires prompt medical attention. For further details visit [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au).

There are excellent, specialised public health facilities for women and children in Brisbane. If you have an immediate and serious health problem, phone or visit the casualty department of the nearest public hospital.

Over-the-counter medications are available at chemists (pharmacies) throughout Queensland. These include painkillers, antihistamines, and skin-care products. You may find that medications readily available over the counter in some countries are only available in Australia by prescription. These include the oral contraceptive pill, some medications for asthma and all antibiotics. If you take medication on a regular basis, bring an adequate supply and ensure you have details of the generic name as brand names may differ between countries.

In remote locations there may be significant delays in emergency services reaching you in the event of serious accident or illness – do not underestimate the vast distances between most major outback towns. An increased level of self-reliance and preparation is essential; consider taking a wilderness first-aid course, such as those offered at the **Wilderness Medicine Institute** ([www.wmi.net.au](http://www.wmi.net.au)); take a comprehensive first-aid kit that's appropriate for the activities planned and ensure that you have adequate means of communication. Queensland has extensive mobile-phone coverage, but radio communications are important for remote areas. The Royal Flying Doctor Service provides a back-up for remote communities.

## INFECTIOUS DISEASES

### Meningococcal Disease

Meningitis occurs worldwide and is a risk with prolonged, dormitory-style accommodation. A vaccine exists for some types of this disease, namely meningococcal A, C, Y and W. No vaccine is presently available for the viral type of meningitis.

### Dengue Fever

Dengue fever can occur in northern Queensland, particularly during the wet season (Nov-

ember to April). Also known as 'breakbone fever', because of the severe muscular pains that accompany it, this viral disease is spread by a species of mosquito that feeds primarily during the day. Most people recover in a few days, but more severe forms of the disease can occur, particularly in residents who are exposed to another strain of the virus (there are four types) in a subsequent season.

### Ross River Fever

The Ross River virus is spread by mosquitoes living in marshy areas and is widespread throughout Australia. In addition to fever, the disease causes headache, joint and muscular pains and a rash, before resolving after five to seven days.

### Tick Typhus

Tick typhus cases have been reported throughout Australia, but are predominantly found in Queensland and New South Wales. A week or so after being bitten a dark area forms around the bite, followed by a rash and possible fever, headache and inflamed lymph nodes. The disease is treatable with antibiotics (doxycycline) so see a doctor if you suspect you have been bitten.

### Viral Encephalitis

Also known as Murray River encephalitis, this virus is spread by mosquitoes. Although the risk to most travellers is low, it is a potentially serious disease normally accompanied by headache, muscle pains and light sensitivity. Residual neurological damage can occur and no treatment is available.

### Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

STDs occur at rates similar to almost all other Western countries. The most common symptoms are pain while passing urine, and a discharge. Infection can be present without symptoms, so seek medical screening after any unprotected sex with a new partner. Throughout the country, you'll find sexual-health clinics in all of the major hospitals. Always use a condom with any new sexual partner. Condoms are readily available in chemists and through vending machines in many public places, including toilets.

### Giardiasis

Drinking untreated water from streams and lakes is not recommended due to the widespread

presence of giardiasis in the waterways around Australia. Water filters, and boiling or treating water with iodine, are effective in preventing the disease. Symptoms consist of intermittent bad-smelling diarrhoea, abdominal bloating and wind. Effective treatment is available (tinidazole or metronidazole).

## ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

### Coral Cuts

Coral can be extremely sharp; you can cut yourself by merely brushing against the stuff. Even a small cut can be very painful, and coral cuts are notoriously slow to heal. If a cut is not adequately cleaned, small pieces of coral can become embedded in the wound, resulting in serious infections. Wash any coral cuts thoroughly and douse them with a good antiseptic. The best solution is not to get cut in the first place – avoid touching coral! It causes serious environmental damage anyway.

### Heat Sickness

Very hot weather is experienced year-round in some parts of Queensland. When arriving from a temperate or cold climate, remember that it takes two weeks for acclimatisation to occur. Before the body is acclimatised, an excessive amount of salt is lost by perspiring, so increasing the salt in your diet is essential.

Heat exhaustion occurs when fluid intake does not keep up with fluid loss. Symptoms include dizziness, fainting, fatigue, nausea or vomiting. On observation the skin is usually pale, cool and clammy. Treatment consists of rest in a cool, shady place and replacing fluid with water or diluted sports drinks.

Heatstroke is a severe form of heat illness that occurs after fluid depletion or extreme heat challenge from heavy exercise. This is a true medical emergency with heating of the brain leading to disorientation, hallucinations and seizures. Prevention is by maintaining an adequate fluid intake to ensure the continued passage of clear and copious urine, especially during physical exertion.

A number of unprepared travellers die from dehydration each year in outback Australia. This can be prevented by following these simple rules:

- Carry sufficient water for any trip, including extra in case of breakdown. Always let someone, such as the local police, know where you are going and when you expect to arrive.

- Carry communications equipment of some form.
- In nearly all cases it is better to stay with the vehicle rather than walking for help.

### Insect-Borne Illness

Various insects can be a source of irritation. Queensland's most significant insect-borne diseases are Ross River fever and viral encephalitis. Outbreaks are most likely to occur in January and February, but the chances of infection are slight. See opposite for tips on avoiding mozzie bites.

### Surf Beaches & Drowning

There are some exceptional surf beaches in the state's south. Beaches vary enormously in the slope of the underlying bottom, resulting in varying power of the surf. Check with the local surf life-saving organisation before entering the water, and be aware of your own limitations and expertise.

### Sunburn & Skin Cancer

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. Monitor exposure to direct sunlight closely. Ultraviolet (UV) exposure is greatest between 10am and 4pm, so avoid skin exposure during these times. Wear a wide-brimmed hat and a long-sleeved shirt with a collar, and always use 30+ sunscreen, applied 30 minutes before exposure, and repeated regularly to minimise sun damage. At the beach or in the outback protect your eyes with good-quality sunglasses.

### Water-Borne Illness

Tap water is universally safe in Queensland. Increasing numbers of streams, rivers and lakes, however, are being contaminated by bugs that cause diarrhoea, making water purification essential if you take water directly from these sources. The simplest way of purifying water is to boil it thoroughly. Consider purchasing a water filter. It's very important when buying a filter to read the specifications indicating exactly what it removes from the water and what it doesn't. Simple filtering will not remove all dangerous organisms, so if you cannot boil water it should be treated chemically. Chlorine tablets will kill many pathogens, but not some parasites such as giardia and amoebic cysts. Iodine is more effective in purifying water and is available in tablet form. Follow the directions care-

### A BIT OF PERSPECTIVE

Australia's plethora of critters that bite and sting is impressive, but don't let it put you off. There's approximately one shark-attack fatality per year in Australia, and a similar number of croc-attack deaths. Blue-ringed-octopus deaths are even rarer – only two in the last century – and there's only ever been one confirmed death from a cone shell. Jellyfish do better, disposing of about two people each year. You're still more than 100 times more likely to *drown* than be killed by one of these nasties.

On land, snakes kill one or two people per year (about the same as bee stings, or less than a thousandth of those killed on the roads). There hasn't been a recorded death from a tick bite for more than 50 years, nor from spider bites in the last 20.

fully and remember that too much iodine can be harmful.

### CUTS, BITES & STINGS

Calamine lotion or Stingose spray will give some relief for minor bites and stings, and ice packs will reduce the pain and swelling. Wash well and treat any cut with an antiseptic. Where possible avoid bandages and Band-Aids, which can keep wounds moist.

### Bed Bugs

Bed bugs are, at varying times, a real problem at hostels along the coast of Queensland. Most hostels ban you from using your own sleeping bag in order to minimise their spread, but it only takes one guest to carry them from hostel to hostel. If you find that you've picked some up in your luggage or clothes, stick the lot in a clothes dryer for an hour; the heat will kill them.

### Marine Animals

Marine spikes, such as those found on sea urchins, catfish and stingrays, can cause severe local pain. If this occurs, immediately immerse the affected area in hot water (as hot as can be tolerated). Keep topping up with hot water until the pain subsides and medical care can be reached.

Butterfly cod, scorpion fish and stonefish all have a series of poisonous spines down their back. These can inflict a serious wound and cause incredible pain. Blue-ringed octopuses and Barrier Reef cone shells can also be fatal, so don't pick them up. If someone is stung, apply a pressure bandage, monitor breathing carefully and conduct mouth-to-mouth resuscitation if breathing stops.

Marine stings from jellyfish, such as box jellyfish and Irukandji, also occur in Australia's tropical waters. The box jellyfish has an incredibly potent sting and has been known, very

rarely, to cause fatalities. Warning signs exist at any affected beaches (so pay attention and you'll be okay) and stinger nets are in place at the more popular beaches. If you're north of Agnes Water between November and April, it's best to check with locals before diving in, unless there's a stinger net. 'Stinger suits' (full-body Lycra swimsuits) prevent stinging, as do wetsuits. If you are stung, first aid consists of washing the skin with vinegar to prevent further discharge of remaining stinging cells, followed by rapid transfer to a hospital; antivenin is widely available. For more information see the boxed text on p251.

Also watch out for stingrays, which can inflict a nasty wound with their barbed tails, and sea snakes, which are potentially deadly, although they are more often curious than aggressive. Basic reef safety rules are:

- Avoid touching all marine life.
- Wear shoes with strong soles when you're walking near reefs.
- Don't eat fish you don't know about or can't identify.
- Don't swim in murky water; try to swim in bright sunlight.

### Mosquitoes

Mozzies can be a problem, especially in the warmer tropical and subtropical areas. Fortunately, malaria is not present in Australia, although its counterpart, dengue fever, is a significant danger in the tropics (see p479). Protection from mosquitoes, sandflies and ticks can be achieved by a combination of the following strategies:

- Wearing loose, long-sleeved clothing.
- Application of 30% DEET on all exposed skin, repeating application every three to four hours (Rid is effective).
- Impregnation of clothing with permethrin (an insecticide that kills insects but is safe for humans).

- Consider investing in a mosquito net, stocked by most camping shops.
- Mosquito coils are another solution, but the smoke they produce is fairly noxious.
- You'll rarely be bitten if you sleep under a ceiling fan set to a high speed.
- The default technique is to share a room with someone who is tastier to mozzies than you are!

### Sharks & Crocodiles

Despite extensive media coverage, the risk of shark attack in Australian waters is no greater than in other countries with extensive coastlines. The risk of an attack from sharks on scuba divers in Queensland is extremely low, as sharks tend to favour the southern states (perhaps southerners taste better?). If you're worried, check with local life-saving groups about local risks.

The risk of crocodile attack in tropical Far North Queensland, on the other hand, is real, but it is predictable and entirely avoidable with some common sense. If you're away from popular beaches anywhere north of Mackay, it would be worth discussing the risk with locals (or the police or tourist agencies in the area) before swimming in rivers, waterholes and in the sea near river outlets.

### Snakes

Australian snakes have a fearful reputation that is justified in terms of the potency of their venom, but unjustified in terms of the actual risk to travellers and locals. Snakes are usually quite timid in nature and in most instances will move away if disturbed. They are endowed with only small fangs, making it easy to prevent bites to the lower limbs (where 80% of bites occur) by wearing protective clothing (such as gaiters) around the ankles when bushwalking. The bite marks are small, and preventing the spread of toxic venom can be achieved by applying pressure to the wound and immobilizing the area with a splint or sling before seeking medical attention. Application of an elastic bandage (you can improvise with a T-shirt) wrapped

firmly – but not tight enough to cut off the circulation – around the entire limb, along with immobilisation, is a life-saving first-aid measure. Don't use a tourniquet, and *don't* (despite what you might have seen on *Tarzan*) try to suck out the poison!

### Spiders

Australia has a number of poisonous spiders, although the only one to have caused a single death in the last 50 years (the Sydney funnel-web) isn't found in Queensland. Redback-spider bites cause increasing pain at the site followed by profuse sweating. First aid includes application of ice or cold packs to the bite and transfer to hospital. Some paranoia revolves around the bite of the whitetail (brown recluse) spider, which has been blamed (perhaps unfairly) for causing slow-healing ulcers; if you are bitten, clean the wound thoroughly and seek medical assistance.

The spider you are most likely to encounter in Queensland is the huntsman, a large, tarantulalike spider that can administer a painful but harmless bite. Also common in the Daintree area is the harmless golden orb spider, with its distinctive plum-coloured abdomen.

### Ticks & Leeches

The common bush tick (found in the forest and scrub country all along the eastern coast of Australia) can be dangerous if left lodged in the skin because the toxin the tick excretes can cause partial paralysis and, in theory, even death. Check your body for lumps every night if you're walking in tick-infested areas. The tick should be removed by dousing it with methylated spirits or kerosene and levering it out, but make sure you remove it intact. Remember to check children and dogs for ticks after a walk in the bush.

Leeches are common, and while they will suck your blood they are not dangerous and are easily removed by the application of salt or heat. You'll usually find yourself carrying a few 'passengers' at the end of any walk in the Daintree.

# Glossary

## Australian English

Following are some of the terms and phrases commonly uttered by those strange folk who speak Australian (that's 'Strayn', mate), as well as some words derived from Aboriginal languages. See also p47 for food- and drink-related terminology.

**4WD** - four-wheel drive vehicle

**Akubra** - a brand of hat favoured by farmers, politicians and Channel Nine presenters on rural assignments

**arvo** - afternoon

**Aussie Rules** - Australian Football League (AFL), mostly played by *Mexicans*

**back o' Bourke** - back of beyond, middle of nowhere

**banana bender** - resident of Queensland

**bastard** - general form of address between mates that can mean many things, from high praise or respect ('He's the bravest bastard I know') to dire insult ('You bastard!')

**B&B** - bed-and-breakfast accommodation

**BBQ** - barbecue

**beaut, beauty, bewdie** - great, fantastic

**bevan** - *bogan* in Queensland

**block, do your** - lose your temper

**bloke** - man

**blowies, blow flies** - large flies

**blow-in** - stranger

**bludger** - lazy person, one who refuses to work

**blue** - to have an argument or fight (eg 'have a blue')

**bogan** - young, unsophisticated person

**bommie** - large underwater pinnacle surrounded by coral

**bonzer** - great

**boomerang** - a curved, flat wooden instrument used by Aboriginal people for hunting

**Buckley's** - no chance at all

**bullroarer** - secret instrument used by Aborigines that comprises a long piece of wood swung around the head on a string, creating an eerie roar; often used in men's initiation ceremonies

**burl** - have a try (eg 'give it a burl'); also a ride in a car

**BYO** - bring your own (usually applies to alcohol at a restaurant or café)

**cane toad** - a feral pest; also a nickname for a Queenslander

**carl it** - to die

**cask** - wine box (a great Australian invention); also known as 'chateau cardboard'

**chocka/chockers** - completely full, from 'chock-a-block'  
**chuck a U-ey** - do a U-turn, turn a car around within a road

**clobber** - to hit; clothes

**cocky** - small-scale farmer

**corroboree** - Aboriginal festival or gathering for ceremonial or spiritual reasons; from the Dharug word 'garaabara' (a style of dancing)

**crack a mental/the shits** - lose your temper

**crickey** - exclamation of mild surprise as in 'crikey... these khaki pants are way too tight!'

**dag** - dirty lump of wool at back end of a sheep; also an affectionate or mildly abusive term for a socially inept person

**daks** - trousers

**dead horse** - tomato sauce

**dead set** - true, dinkum

**didjeridu** - cylindrical wooden musical instrument traditionally played by Aboriginal men

**digger** - originally used as a reference to Australian and New Zealand WWI and WWII soldiers; also used to describe miners; see *mate*

**dill** - idiot

**dinky-di** - the real thing

**donga** - small, transportable building widely used in the *outback*

**Dreaming/Dreamtime** - complex concept that forms the basis of Aboriginal spirituality, incorporating the creation of the world and the spiritual energies operating around us; '*Dreaming*' is often the preferred term as it avoids the association with time

**dropbear** - imaginary Australian bush creature, similar in faunal fiction status to the 'womby-dog' (which has clockwise and anticlockwise breeds)

**dunny** - outdoor lavatory

**fair dinkum** - honest, genuine

**flat out** - very busy or fast

**FNQ** - Far North Queensland

**footy** - probably rugby league but (if you're talking to a *Mexican*) might refer to *Aussie Rules*

**freshie** - freshwater crocodile (the harmless one, unless provoked); new *tinny* of beer

**g'day** - good day; traditional Australian greeting

**grog** - general term for alcoholic drinks

**grouse** - very good

**GST** - Goods and Services Tax, a 10% tax added to most goods and services purchased in Australia

**hicksville** - derogatory term usually employed by urbanites to describe a country town

**hoon** - idiot, hooligan, yahoo

**iffy** - dodgy, questionable

**indie** - independent music bands

**jackaroo** - male trainee on an *outback station*

**jillaroo** - female trainee on an *outback station*

**jocks** - men's underpants

**Kanaka** - person of Pacific Islands heritage brought to Australia as a labourer in the 19th and early 20th centuries

**Kiwi** - New Zealander

**knackered** - broken, tired

**larrikin** - hooligan, mischievous youth

**lay-by** - to put a deposit on an article so the shop will hold it for you

**lemon** - faulty product, a dud

**little ripper** - extremely good thing

**loo** - toilet

**mate** - general term of familiarity, whether you know the person or not

**Mexican** - anyone from south of the border (usually New South Wales or Victoria)

**milk bar** - small shop selling milk and other basic provisions

**mobile phone** - cell phone

**never-never** - remote country in the *outback*

**no worries** - no problems, that's OK

**ocker** - an uncultivated or boorish Australian; a knocker or derider

**op-shop** - opportunity shop; a shop selling secondhand goods for charity

**outback** - remote part of inland Australia, *back o' Bourke*

**piker** - someone who doesn't pull their weight, or chickens out

**piss** - beer

**piss weak** - no good, gutless

**pissed** - drunk

**pissed off** - annoyed

**plonk** - cheap wine

**pokies** - poker machines

**pom** - English person

**Queenslander** - high-set weatherboard house noted for its wide veranda and sometimes ornate lattice-work; also a resident of Queensland

**rapt** - delighted, enraptured

**ratbag** - friendly term of abuse

**ratshit/RS** - lousy

**rellie** - (family) relative

**roo** - kangaroo

**root** - have sexual intercourse

**rooted** - tired, broken

**ropable** - very bad-tempered or angry

**RSL** - Returned & Services League; RSL clubs often offer inexpensive food, gambling and entertainment

**saltie** - saltwater crocodile (the dangerous one)

**schoolies** - month-long holiday for school leavers on the Gold Coast

**sheila** - woman

**shonky** - unreliable

**slab** - two dozen stubbies or tinnies

**SLSC** - Surf Life Saving Club

**station** - large farm

**stolen generations** - Indigenous Australian children forcibly removed from their families during the government's policy of assimilation

**stroppy** - bad-tempered

**Stubbies** - popular brand of men's work shorts

**take the piss** - deliberately telling someone a mistruth, often as social sport

**tall poppies** - achievers (knockers like to cut them down)

**tea** - evening meal

**thongs** - flip-flops, an *ocker's* idea of formal footwear

**tinny** - can of beer; also a small aluminium boat

**togs** - swimming costume

**trucky** - truck driver

**tucker** - food

**two-pot screamer** - person unable to hold their alcohol

**two-up** - traditional gambling game using two coins

**ute** - short for utility; a pick-up truck

**van** - caravan

**walkabout** - lengthy walk away from it all

**whinge** - complain, moan

**whoop-whoop** - *outback*, miles from anywhere

**wobbly** - disturbing, unpredictable behaviour (eg 'throw a wobbly')

**woomera** - stick used by Aboriginal people for throwing spears

**XXXX** - a brand of beer; Queensland's unofficial state drink

**yobbo** - uncouth, aggressive person

**yonks** - ages, a long time

**youse** - plural of you, pronounced 'yooze'

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