

Useful Travel Tips

Prepare for your Australian trip with our practical tips. Learn about our currency, how to make calls, keep safe and shop responsibly. Then you're ready to go.



Money

Australia's currency is Australian Dollars (AUD) and currency exchange is available at banks, hotels and international airports. The most commonly accepted credit cards are American Express, Bankcard, Diners Club, MasterCard, Visa, JCB and their affiliates.



Credit Cards

Many retailers in Australia, including restaurants, hotels and taxis, charge an additional 1.5 - 3% on your bill if you choose to pay by credit card.



Emergency assistance

The emergency number for police, ambulance and or fire brigade is 000.



Surf and water safety

Australia's popular beaches are usually patrolled by volunteer lifesavers from October to April and red and yellow flags mark the safest area for swimming. For information about marine stingers and crocodile safety read the Queensland Government website.



Language

Australia's official language is English. However, being a multicultural nation with a significant migrant population, we also enjoy a tremendous diversity of languages and cultures.



Electrical power points

Our electrical current is 220 – 240 volts, AC 50Hz. The Australian three-pin power outlet is different from some other countries, so you may need an adaptor.



Postal services

Post offices are usually open 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday, with some city post offices open on Saturday morning.



Goods and Services Tax

Australia has a Goods and Services Tax (GST) of 10 per cent. You may be able to claim a refund of the GST paid on goods bought here if you have spent AUD\$300 or more in one store, no more than 60 days before departing Australia. Tourist Refund Scheme facilities are located in the departure area of international terminals. For more detailed information see Australian government information on the Tourist Refund Scheme.



Shopping

You'll find large department stores, arcades, malls, gift and souvenir shops across Australia. Trading hours vary across the country but shops in tourist and city areas are generally open until 6pm, with the exception of late night shopping on either Thursdays or Fridays in different states. In Australia you are covered by Australia's consumer protection laws which require businesses to treat you fairly.



Tipping and bargaining

Hotels and restaurants do not add service charges to your bill. In up market restaurants, it is usual to tip waiters up to ten per cent of the bill for good service. However, tipping is always your choice. It is not custom to bargain in Australia.



Mobile / Cell Phones

Will yours work?

Australia uses the 900MHz and 1800MHz GSM bands for mobile phones. Before you arrive in Australia check that your phone will work on these bands. Either look at the instruction booklet that came with your phone, or call the phone supplier. Many mobile phones used in North America are CDMA band phones only, and will not work in Australia. If your phone is marketed as “GSM”, “tri-band” or “quad-band” it’s a good bet your phone will work.

If your phone works on these bands, you have two options for making and receiving calls in Australia:

- Using your existing SIM card
- Buying a new SIM card once you get to Australia

If you are using your existing SIM card, the only thing you need to check is if your service operator has enabled “roaming.” This will allow you to use the networks in Australia with your SIM card. There are sometimes very high call charges for this though. Check with your service operator before you leave.

If you wish to buy a new SIM card once you get to Australia, your phone must be “unlocked.” This service may be performed by your phone manufacturer or a local mobile phone shop. SIM cards can be purchased from service operators like Telstra, Vodafone, Optus and Virgin Mobile and cost around \$20-30. Also, to save money on SMS use a free SMS service to Australia such as SMS4all.

Before buying a new SIM card check carefully which regions the telecom operator covers. Vodafone SIM cards, for example, do not have coverage in rural areas north of Perth in Western Australia. Telstra provides better coverage in this region.

Note that in Australia, the person initiating a call involving a mobile phone pays for the airtime. You can identify a mobile phone as the phone number

starts with 04. (This means that receiving calls on a mobile phone in Australia are free; if you call a mobile phone, you pay for the airtime).

Renting or buying a mobile phone

If you do not have a mobile phone of your own, or want to purchase one when you get here, there are many options. The main service operators have phone and SIM card packs to buy for as little as \$59-99. This will get you a basic phone and around \$10 in phone credit that you can top up at any time.

Other options

If you don’t have a mobile phone and don’t want to pay too much for calling internationally, pick up an international calling card - you can find these at any newsagents and some supermarkets. They come in many different denominations and each will have its own rate for different countries. You buy a card, then use an existing phone (usually a payphone) to call a special number listed on the card. You can then dial the number you wish to call and you will be charged at the cheap rate.



Data / Internet Access

Australia’s hotels do not usually offer internet access free of charge, however most now have free wifi available in common areas such as their lobby lounges. Data plans can be purchased for use in your accommodation room in your hotels, however these are approximately \$25 AUD for 24 hour access.

All the major providers such as Telstra, Optus and Vodafone have prepaid plans, where you can choose quantity of data and just top up as required.

Data plans, like phone plans, can be purchased at most convenience stores, phone shops or newsagents.

Many cafes and fast food restaurants have free wifi, such as McDonalds and Starbucks.