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Travel To Sydney: From Convict Outcasts To Global Chic? Why, Yes...

By Frank Johnson

The shining port city of Sydney has come a long way from its humble colonial beginnings when the

British arrived in the 18th century. Urban class goes hand in hand with suburban lifestyle, leaving more than enough opportunity in between to get outside and explore like only Australians know how. World class dining, a jaw-dropping collection of endangered species, and the signature Opera House against the beautiful backdrop of Port Jackson all make it difficult to imagine that Sydney is hardly 200 years young.

When Captain James Cook's British Fleet arrived at Botany Bay in 1788, he brought with him nearly a thousand convicts from Great Britain to establish a penal settlement, which became the small colony at The Rocks that would sprout into Sydney. At this time, aboriginal people had inhabited the area for over 30,000 years and were largely killed off or retreated into the Blue Mountains. The surrounding area is still full of stone carvings that visitors may view today; travelers may also partake in the growing recognition and celebration of indigenous culture. In addition to the largely Anglo-Celtic population, the 20th century brought to Sydney a new wave of immigration from Croatia, Lebanon, Argentina and Turkey to name but a small fraction and today the city is a culinary and cosmopolitan cornerstone of the globe not to be missed!

Harbor Hopping and Ferry Frolicking Sydney occupies the largest natural harbor in the world and offers divinely picturesque sunset views from nearly any of the 70 harbor beaches in the metropolitan region. The best way to see the harbor is by taking a ferry from central Sydney to the Toronga Zoo, where koala, platypus and about 3,000 other endangered or rare species enjoy prime oceanfront property. The Royal Botanical Garden in central Sydney is also quite remarkable, featuring the preserved site of the colony's first paltry vegetable patch. To the southwest, Bondi Beach is Sydney's sandy seaside escape, complete with gelato vendors, funky pubs and an overall air of relaxation.

There are even more ways to enjoy the city proper when you travel to Sydney, including one of the open-air performances on the Opera House terrace during the summer. The iconic Harbour Bridge, known as the 'coathanger' among locals, is an adventure in itself. Climb the stairs of the southeast pylon for an unimaginable view of the harbor or pay a bit extra in money and adrenalin and spend a few hours actually climbing the bridge through a certified company. For the more earth-bound, the

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Museum of Contemporary Art is a point of interest, if only for the terrific Art Deco building in which it resides, and the Art Gallery houses an impressive collection of 18th and 19th century works. Following a long day of harbors, beaches, art and amusement, King's Cross is just the perfect blend of trendy class and underground subculture for a fine meal, chichi cocktail or gritty groove.

In many ways, Sydney is the heart and soul of Oceania. A true melting pot of cultures, ecology and histories, Sydney is the capital of Australia in every respect but title. Discover this fascinating part of the southern hemisphere from the pleasures and treasures of Sydney, a remarkably diverse, mature and modern metropolis.

For more information, visit

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NEW ZEALAND–AUSTRALIA TRAVEL SPECIALIST SPEAKS

By Alece Schreiber

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Have you ever approached your local travel agent with a request for information on an out of the ordinary destination? Have you seen his or her eyes glaze over? You may be in need of a niche travel specialist, one who puts all of her energies and study on one part of the world.

This is a situation that happens often when people are seeking help in planning travel to Australia. The map of Australia looks quite similar to the map of the United States. But, do you know that a huge percentage of this continent's population lives on the east, southern and west coasts? 8,000,000 of Australia's 20,000,000 people reside in Sydney. The center and most of the northern portions of the country are barren and devoid of almost all human habitation.

People may not be aware that in both New Zealand and Australia the seasons are reversed when compared to the United States. June in the eastern U.S. is similar to December in Melbourne. Conversely, December in New York is akin to June in Sydney. Spring and fall are reversed and both are good times to travel to Australia and New Zealand. Queensland, in the far northeast, Darwin in the north central area and Broome in the west, all in Australia, are tropical. In other words, for North Americans, north is south and south is north!

What time is it in Sydney or Auckland is a frequently asked question. During the North American winter, the time in Sydney is EST plus 16 hours. In Auckland, it is EST plus 18 hours. When you leave in the evening from Los Angeles for Sydney or Auckland on May 1st , you will cross the international

date line and will not arrive at your destination until early morning of May 3rd. On your return, you will arrive back in LA on the same calendar day that you leave the South Pacific.

This is the type of information that you can get from an agent specializing in one or a few destinations. Don't go the route of a generalist to help when you are focused on one part of the world. Help is available so that you have accurate and informative facts on your proposed destination.

This article was written by:

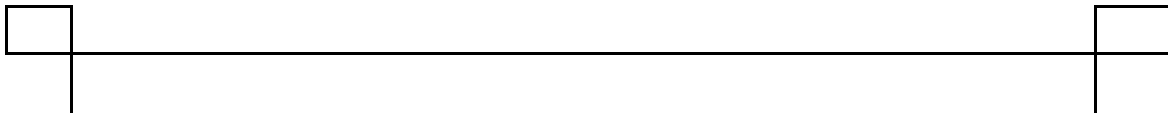
Alece Schreiber
<http://www.AustraliaSpecialist.com>
alece@worldnet.att.net

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