

[Australia and Oceania](#)

[Australia](#)

INSPIRATION

# The Best Things to Do in Australia for Every Season

With its diverse landscapes, climates, and cultures, there's always something to do in Australia—no matter when you visit.

BY [MATT ORTILE](#)

October 10, 2024

Play/Pause Button

Getty

The best things to do in Australia go well beyond [Bondi Beach](#) and having a flat white. While those are absolute musts, there are plenty of other reasons to visit [Australia](#) over and over again, and at different times throughout the year.

Chief among those reasons is the country's size and diversity of landscapes. From the ancient rainforests of [Queensland](#), to the waterfalls and islands in the Kimberley region of [Western Australia](#), to the dynamic urban atmospheres of [Sydney](#) and [Melbourne](#), there's something for every type of traveler to enjoy here. Since Australia is roughly the same size as the United States, it has just as many—if not more, dare we say—different natural environments and cultural scenes. In the same way that no sensible travel expert would suggest combining [New York](#) and [Los Angeles](#) into the same itinerary, you can't cram all of Australia into one trip. To really experience the vast array of experiences that Australia has to offer, you'll find yourself wanting to return—again and again.

ADVERTISEMENT

## When to visit Australia

Given Australia's location in the Southern Hemisphere, it's an ideal destination for travelers looking to escape the winter doldrums or oppressive sun where they live. When it's high summer in July in the deserts of [Las Vegas](#), a trip Down Under, where it would be winter at that time, is

the perfect cool-weather antidote to that arid heat. Or when the Chicago freeze gets to be too much in December, there's nothing quite like celebrating Christmas while wearing shorts on the sands of [Bondi Beach](#). And if you do end up craving a different type of climate while you're in Australia, other spots like the desert plains of Australia's [Red Centre](#) or the country's many islands are just a short flight away from the bigger cities.

All that said, let this guide be your compass: No matter when you decide to visit Australia, there's always something to try, see, and taste. To get the best advice, we reached out to travel experts who know the country best for their recommendations: Rachel Cooper, regional manager for Australia of travel specialist [Red Savannah](#); and Sarah Shields, media relations manager at [Baillie Lodges](#), a collection of luxury lodges predominantly found in Australia. Here's a hefty but far-from-complete list of some of the best things to do in Australia in every season.

- [Things to do in Australia in the fall](#)
- [Things to do in Australia in the winter](#)
- [Things to do in Australia in the spring](#)
- [Things to do in Australia in the summer](#)
- [How to get to Australia](#)

ADVERTISEMENT



March is a great time to visit Lord Howe Island, where the waters offer excellent visibility for diving—and the luxurious Capella Lodge awaits.

Courtesy Capella Lodge

# Australian fall: underwater adventure, remote natural wonder, and chic lodges

In Australia, the months of March, April, and May bring about the autumn season. This is one of the best times to explore the outdoors since most Aussie environments will be at their best and most comfortable. That goes for the underwater landscape too: [March](#) is a great time to visit [Lord Howe Island](#), says Cooper of Red Savannah, where the waters offer excellent visibility for snorkelers and divers looking to see coral gardens, tropical fish, and even green sea turtles. (While you're there, check into [Capella Lodge](#), a luxury lodge with beach, lagoon, and mountain views that's a regular winner of *Condé Nast Traveler's Readers' Choice Awards*.) The same goes for the other end of the country, in Western Australia: [Ningaloo Reef](#) sits off the coast of Cape Range National Park and is a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) and home to 500 species of fish, 250 coral species and 600 species of mollusks—and if you're lucky, you might see [whale sharks](#) as well.

If you want to experience something a little more terrestrial, the cooler temperatures of [April](#) are perfect for visiting Australia's deserts and rainforests. In Queensland, there's the [Daintree Rainforest](#), one of the oldest rainforests on the planet, with unique ecosystems, pristine beaches, and a rich Indigenous cultural heritage. To see all of it and more, stay at the gorgeous [Silky Oaks Lodge](#) (awarded a spot on our [Hot List](#) in 2022, and our [Gold List](#) in 2024), where the staff can arrange river safaris and First Nations-guided tours of the forest. You can fly into [the Red Centre](#), the heart of Australia, to experience a one-of-a-kind dinner on a sand dune with a view of majestic Uluru with [Tali Wiru](#): Enjoy canapés and Champagne at sunset, a four-course dinner paired with top-notch Australian wine, and the company of an Indigenous storyteller who shares the local culture, history, and spirituality of the land and their people.

Even as Aussie winter approaches in [May](#), visitors still enjoy summery activities like visiting the [Great Barrier Reef](#). In fact, Cooper says, “With fewer crowds compared to peak tourist months, it's a perfect time for reef cruises, island hopping, and relaxing on the beautiful [Whitsunday Islands](#).”

May also marks the start of whale migration season here, providing opportunities to spot humpback whales as they journey north. And if you're in Australia to chase the chill—and accompanying cozy vibes—Tasmania, the country's southernmost island, is the place to go. Shields of Baillie Lodges recommends booking a room at [Saffire Freycinet](#), where guests can go out to [Freycinet Marine Farm](#) and taste freshly-shucked oysters (some of the best in the world, I have to say), downing them all with Tasmanian sparkling wine.



Depending on where you go in Australia, winter also brings opportunities for whale watching.

PomInOz

## **Australian winter: wildlife watching, culinary excursions, and Indigenous celebrations**

Winter in Australia is rather temperate, ranging on average from 47°F to 63°F. This makes it a perfect “coolcation” destination when other parts of the world are experiencing hot weather in June, July, and August. This season brings ample snow for [skiing the slopes Down Under](#)—and the wise culinary traveler also knows that this is a time for feasting: Winter is truffle season in [Canberra](#). Just a five-minute drive from the airport is [Beltana Farm](#), where you can hunt alongside a truffle dog for those delicious black diamonds; you can use what you find for an on-site lunch as well. For restaurants, nothing beats strolling down Flinders Lane in [Melbourne](#), a city known for its diversity of cultures and cuisines. On this street, you’ll find everything from Malaysian laksa to Greek souvlaki—even Vegemite curry at the restaurant [Sunda](#). And the local coffee culture can’t be beat; a flat white at the chic eatery [Higher Ground](#) is the perfect way to start the day. Plus, you can easily head out to Yarra Valley to visit one of about 80 boutique wineries strong winemaking lineages like [Yarra Yering](#) and [Punt Road](#) (both are just an hour away from Melbourne).

The best time to see whales in and around Sydney is mid-June to mid-July, so Shields suggests visiting the Bouddi Peninsula of New South Wales, a 90-minute drive north from the city, and checking into [Pretty Beach House](#)—and yes, it is what it says on the tin. The team here organizes [whale watching tours](#) aboard a 39-foot catamaran and goes out into the waters of the Central Coast. (Worry not if you miss the whales; you’ll still be served a high-tea-style lunch, making it a fabulous time regardless.) On the opposite end of the country, [July](#) is when the [biggest display of wildflowers](#) in the world begins to bloom in Western Australia’s the [Golden Outback](#). The wetter the rainy season that precedes the bloom, the more vibrant the flowers. But no matter the weather, the [Wheatbelt](#) and [Esperance](#) usually offer consistently beautiful flowers.

In [August](#), head up to the Northern Territory, to the town of Nhulunbuy, for the [Garma Festival](#), the country’s largest Indigenous gathering where the Yolngu clans of Arnhem Land celebrate life and their stories through art, music, and dance. This a fantastic opportunity to engage with and learn from the country’s Indigenous people, who have lived on this land since time immemorial. (In 2025, the Garma Festival will be held from August 1 to 4.) Head from the north to the south—perhaps via the famous train journey [The Ghan](#)—and hop over to [Kangaroo Island](#) where, as Shields says, “wildlife is at its [most active in the winter](#).” There, you can get an oceanside

view of the marvelous landscape from the dreamy [Southern Ocean Lodge](#), a Hot List and Readers' Choice Awards winner for 2024. Here, the sustainability-minded team puts together all types of excursions throughout the island, and you'll likely see kangaroos and koalas while you're just driving through the neighborhood. (But even if you just stay in, relax in the spa, and taste test every South Australian wine at the help-yourself bar, no one will hold it against you.)



The Great Ocean Road is a roughly 150-mile drive with drastically different landscapes, from beach towns to an inactive volcano.

tsvibrav

## Australian spring: outdoor activities, festivals galore, and good old-fashioned road trips

Spring in Australia occurs in the months of September, October, and November. That's when the weather begins to warm up again and all of Australia celebrates nature—that is, perhaps more than they do already. [Byron Bay](#) is particularly glorious at this time of year, says Cooper:

“I love to send clients there in [September](#) as the weather is optimal for the great outdoors and activities that might include hot air ballooning, hang gliding, whale watching, scuba diving, and snorkeling.”

That month also brings with it a number of cool celebrations of local culture and nature, Shields says: In Broome, Western Australia, [the Shinju Matsuri](#) (meaning ‘festival of the pearl,’ in Japanese) lasts from August into September and honors the region’s multicultural pearling history through food, music, art exhibits, markets, and even a parade. Then from September to [October](#) each year, Canberra is carpeted with more than a million flowers for the [Floriade](#), a month-long celebration of spring that features gorgeous floral displays and lively markets, musical performances, and the best food and wine from across the ACT (that’s the Australian Capital Territory).

Keep going south to Tasmania for the festival known as [The Unconformity](#), which Shields recommends. This biennial contemporary art festival in [Queenstown](#), Tasmania, lasts through all of October and, through different types of media, interprets the striking and unique landscape of western [Tasmania](#). And if you’re ever in Tassie at any other time and seeking a dose of thought-provoking art, you should go to the [Museum of Old and New Art](#). It’s Australia’s largest private museum, and among the world’s most provocative; think sensory-altering spaces by James Turrell and an art installation by Wim Delvoye where machines recreate the human digestive process. (It’s brilliant, I promise.) The entire space—described by its owner as a “subversive adult Disneyland”—is an architectural marvel, so devote an afternoon (or even a day) to a visit so you can fully process what you’ll find at this exciting and unusual institution.

[November](#) in Australia is when summer creeps in, with clearer skies and longer days—ideal conditions for a road trip through the [Great Ocean Road](#) in Victoria. This roughly 150-mile drive features dramatic and drastically different landscapes, from beach towns with charming [cafés](#) and local distilleries to an inactive volcano that now hosts various types of [Aussie wildlife](#). “In November, the Road is less busy and options for accommodations will be plentiful,” says Cooper, meaning you can indulge your curiosity, wherever it may take you. That said, do stop by the [Budj Bim Cultural Landscape](#), where you can learn from the Gunditjmarra people how they used environment’s natural resources to establish settlements over the

past 30,000 years and beyond. (And after all that driving, take a soak in the [Deep Blue Hot Springs](#) at Warrnambool.)



A New Year's Eve in Sydney means you'll be one of the first people in the world to ring in a new year—with those gorgeous fireworks in Sydney Harbour.

E4C

## Australian summer: New Year's festivities, the Australian Open, harvest season, and more

Celebrating Christmas in shorts doesn't only occur in [California](#) or [Florida](#). In Australia, the holiday season happens in the summertime, so if you'd like to deck the halls without having to bundle up, this is the place to be. Plus, a New Year's Eve in Sydney means you'll be one of the first people in the world to ring in a new year—with those gorgeous fireworks in [Sydney Harbour](#), featuring [Harbour Bridge](#) and the [Sydney Opera House](#), no less. (Pro tip: Book a room at the [Park Hyatt Sydney](#)—featured on our [Gold](#)



[List](#) in 2022—for front-row seats to the pyrotechnics right from the comfort of your own room’s balcony.)

Once it’s [January](#), tennis fans all descend upon Melbourne for the [Australian Open](#). “As the opening Grand Slam of the season, it draws world-class athletes, devoted fans, and fierce competition,” says Cooper, giving the already vibrant city another layer of buzzing energy. In 2025, the Australian Open will begin on January 12 and last until January 26. In this month, Cooper also recommends the [Eyre Peninsula](#) in South Australia, an off-the-beaten-track playground for adventure where you can go [sandboarding](#) and helifishing (remote fly fishing excursions via helicopter). But if you’re not keen on too much adrenaline, Cooper says, “You can witness native birds and wildlife in their natural environments, savor Australia’s freshest seafood, and enjoy exceptional wines.”

Speaking of wines, Shields says [February](#) is the perfect time to visit South Australia for a tasting in [the Barossa Valley](#), when harvest season begins: “It’s a great time to get behind the scenes when the action is happening!” Book a visit with a [winery](#) of your choice, where you can learn about Australian viticulture and the difference between Syrah and Shiraz. (Trick question: They’re the same; Shiraz is simply the Australian name for Syrah.) And just as summer gives way to fall again, catch the last of the long sunny days in [the Blue Mountains](#) of New South Wales. The [national park](#) promises epic escarpments, striking rock formations, and breathtaking bush walks less than an hour west of Sydney by car. Cooper suggests activities like zip-lining, canyoning, rafting, and scenic helicopter flights—but a light hike and some star gazing on this side of the earth is just as epic.

---

## How to get to Australia

Planning a trip to Australia is easier than you might think. You can book direct flights with [Qantas Airways](#) to get from Los Angeles, San Francisco, or Dallas to Australian cities like Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane. (US airlines Delta, United, and American also offer direct flights.) Depending on where you are in the world, other airlines like Air New Zealand, Singapore

Airlines, and [Emirates](#) can also offer one-stop flights to the land Down Under.

As for how long to stay, I suggest spending at least a week in Australia to experience various sides of a given destination; say, the state of Victoria, where you can easily taste the coffee culture of Melbourne, dip into the hot springs along Victoria's Great Ocean Road, and meet koalas in [French Island National Park](#). That's one of the brilliant things about Australia: Many different types of adventures can be had because of their easy proximity to each other. All that said, one visit to Australia is certainly not enough. Rather than merely a once-in-a-lifetime experience, visiting all of Australia will take a lifetime.



[Matt Ortile](#) is an associate editor at *Condé Nast Traveler*. He is the author of the essay collection *The Groom Will Keep His Name*, published in 2020. Prior to joining *Traveler*, he was the executive editor of *Catapult* magazine and the founding editor of BuzzFeed Philippines. He has written for... [Read more](#)