

Welcome

Welcome from the International Student Services Unit

The International Student Services Unit (ISSU) welcomes all international students arriving to study at the University of Sydney. Since 1991, the ISSU has been providing an integrated counselling and welfare service to international students studying at the University of Sydney. It is also a resource centre for international students and their families. The ISSU staff are here to help you achieve success in your studies and overcome any difficulties you may experience while you are living and studying in Australia.

The ISSU encourages international students to participate in campus activities and associations as well as in the wider Australian community. It also actively promotes opportunities for you to meet Australian and other international students, and to participate in the life of the University.

Please call in and meet us. Contact ISSU if you need any personal assistance or if you have any difficulties or worries while you are studying at the University of Sydney.

The ISSU staff will meet you at our Daily Arrival Information Sessions and at the Orientation Program. We look forward to getting to know you.

Lidia Nemitschenko

Head

International Student Services Unit



Welcome from the Vice-Chancellor and Principal

Welcome to the University of Sydney! I am very glad that you have come to join us. Your time here will not only equip you with a qualification that is respected throughout the world but will provide a stimulating and enjoyable learning and social experience.

By coming to the University of Sydney you are joining many of the most talented students from all over Australia as well as from 82 different countries. We are very conscious of our responsibility to provide a safe and accepting environment where students from many different backgrounds can freely, securely and enjoyably learn together, so make use of all the student services. They are there for your use, to help and support you.

As well, you will find many opportunities for social, cultural and sporting activities beyond the classroom. Take the time to explore them. Finally, remember that our teaching staff are involved in high level research and scholarship and our courses are prized for their professional relevance and academic excellence. We will demand your best.

Professor Gavin Brown
Vice-Chancellor and Principal
University of Sydney



1

KNOWING YOUR DESTINATION

Australia

Early History

Australia was first settled by Aboriginal people between 40,000 and 60,000 years before the present (BP) and maybe even earlier. These first settlers spread across the entire continent. More than 200 distinctive language groups existed with distinctive spiritual and kinship systems, art and technology. 'Aboriginal' is a European word meaning 'from the beginning'. Indigenous Australians, particularly in Eastern Australia, prefer to refer to themselves as Koori.

European settlement of Australia dates back to 1788 when Britain established a penal colony at Sydney Cove with the landing of the First Fleet. You can gain a good understanding of this period by visiting the Hyde Park Barracks Museum in Macquarie Street, Sydney.

Although the Indigenous inhabitants of the land had systems of land tenure and group ownership, the British considered the land to be *terra nullius* – a Latin term meaning land not belonging to anyone. There were no official negotiations or treaties with the Indigenous owners of the land. The repercussions of this are still felt today and it was only in 1992 that the High Court of Australia, in a case known as the Mabo case, recognised Indigenous people's property rights.

British settlement resulted in the death of many Indigenous people through introduced diseases to which they had no immunity, through the destruction of hunting grounds by grazing and agriculture and through violent confrontations and massacres. Reconciliation to heal the injustices of the past is an ongoing process in Australia.

*(The information in this section is based on
As a Matter of Fact on the www.atsic.gov.au website.)*

The traditional owners of the land on which the University of Sydney is built were the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. At the start of the Orientation Program for International Students a representative of the traditional owners welcomes you to the land.

Australian People

Australia now is a multicultural country with a cultural diversity and richness developed through the migration of people from across the world and from the Indigenous people who are the original inhabitants of Australia.

There have been several major 'waves' of migration to Australia since the penal colony was first set up in 1788. New British settlers followed the convicts and Australia developed an economy that relied on agriculture and merino wool. In the goldrush of the 1850s Irish, American, English, Chinese and Europeans came to try and make their fortune in the goldfields. The Australian term 'mate', used very commonly here, comes from the common title given to the two miners who took out a gold mining lease together.

After the Second World War, Australia offered a home to many European people who were displaced as a result of the war. Later, migrants from Italy and Greece, Lebanon and other countries came to Australia seeking opportunities to make a better life for themselves and their families.

In the 1970s Australia again offered refuge to people whose lives were disrupted by the war in Vietnam and has continued to invite people from South East Asia to migrate to Australia.

The Australian Government supports multiculturalism and equal opportunity for all Australians regardless of race, language, ethnic origin or religion.

Landscape

Australia occupies an area of 7,713,364 square kilometres and is nearly equal in size to the United States of America. The population of Australia is, however, relatively small with just over 19 million people who live mostly around the coastal fringe of the country. Australia is a very urbanised country with almost 90 percent of the population living in the cities and along the coast. Nearly half the nation's total population lives in Sydney and Melbourne. The interior of Australia is very sparsely populated and much of the country in the interior is desert.

States and Territories

Australia is a federation (since 1901) consisting of six states (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania) and two territories (Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory). The capital city of Australia is Canberra which is located in the Australian Capital Territory. The Government of Australia is based on the British Westminster system of Government. The Federal Government led by the Prime Minister consists of a House of Representatives and a Senate. Each State Government is headed by a Premier.

Australian Culture

Australia is a changing and complex multicultural society in which there is interaction between many different values and beliefs. There are some characteristics that are considered to be 'Australian'. They are outlined on page 7.

Informality

Australians are generally informal in their manner of speech and forms of address. First names are used early in a relationship. The formal title or family name is used only in very formal situations. Many academics will encourage you to use their given name. It is best to use a more formal address to someone like a lecturer, professor, medical doctor or VIP unless they ask you to call them by their given name. It is acceptable to ask a person what they would like you to call them.

Joking and Teasing

One of the seemingly paradoxical elements for a newcomer to Australia is the joking humour which Australians use. This teasing and joking behaviour is often quite disconcerting for people from another culture. Language difficulties can also make understanding the humour difficult. It is important to remember that Australians tease people they feel close to and like. It is often a way of trying to demonstrate a welcome to a stranger in a group. It is also to see if the new person can 'take a joke'. It is appropriate to act as if you are not worried by the implied criticism or seeming insult or even to agree and to exaggerate the joke to make it even more outrageous. It is often difficult, particularly if you have recently arrived in Australia, to feel certain if the joke is one where the group or person is joking with you in a friendly way or one where discrimination or prejudice is involved. It is probably best to give the joker the benefit of the doubt and to check out with trusted friends when you are uncertain.

Australian English

When you first arrive in Australia you will probably find the Australian accent difficult to understand. However, you will soon become accustomed to the way English is spoken in Australia. Because there are many people resident in Australia who have a non-English speaking background, there are interpreters available in health services and hospitals to provide assistance. Government information is also available in many different languages in Australia. It is polite to ask someone to repeat what they have said if you did not understand and people will generally speak more slowly and clearly if they are aware you are having some difficulty in understanding. You will find that your language skills will develop once you are studying and living in Australia. You can develop your language skills by making use of the special classes and other assistance available to international students at the University.

Directness

Australians are often very frank and open in what they say. People from countries where delicacy and consideration are important often feel this directness is inappropriately blunt and lacking in courtesy. Australians, however, can be tactful and will try to avoid hurting another person's feelings or causing embarrassment.

Casual

Australians often try to indicate that they are not particularly hardworking, efficient, studious, clever, artistic, creative, attractive and so on. There is some pressure on Australians to not 'stand out'. This is changing, but there is still a tendency for Australians to denigrate their own achievements and to feel uncomfortable with praise and compliments.

Respect

Whilst Australians may seem very disrespectful to people in authority, elderly people, or their parents there is in fact a subtle respect and deference shown towards people in authority. Questioning, or even suggesting alternative solutions, is not seen as disrespectful towards an authority figure provided the suggestions are made in a polite manner.

Eye Contact

Australians make direct eye contact in their gaze with everyone whether the person is an equal or of a different status or social position. Children are taught to look directly at adults and people of higher status. Many Australians feel uncomfortable if someone does not 'meet their eye' and this can be a cultural barrier between Australians and people from cultures where 'eye avoidance' and dropped gaze are considered polite particularly when addressing a more senior or respected person or a person of the opposite sex.

Time

Australians value punctuality and the time arranged for a meeting or get together or meal is the time you are expected to arrive.

Offering Food and Other Things

Australians consider it impolite to force people to accept food or other things. They tend to offer once with only one follow up statement, such as 'are you sure you will not have any more'. This of course is quite the opposite of many other cultures where the host insists on the person taking more several times and then the guest accepts. This difference can lead to misunderstandings. It is polite to immediately accept the offer of more food and also polite to refuse more food if you do not want more at this time.

Refusing an Invitation

It is considered polite in Australia to say directly if you do not want to accept an invitation. People say that they have another obligation or that they would prefer not to accept for the particular event or activity. If you do accept an invitation it is expected that you will honour the arrangement. If you are unable to attend at the last minute it is very important that you contact your host to apologise before the event. It is considered impolite to accept an invitation and not arrive as agreed.

Tipping

Attitudes to tipping in Australia are changing. It is usual now to leave a tip of 10% in a good restaurant if you are happy with the service. However, it is uncommon to leave a tip in coffee shops or cheaper restaurants. People will sometimes leave the small change from payment of the bill for the waiter at this type of establishment. On weekends and public holidays, a surcharge is often added to your bill to cover the cost of higher wages on these days.

Taxis will not expect a tip though it is common to leave small change and to 'round the fare' to the taxi driver's benefit. Airport porters, hairdressers and beauticians do not expect a tip. Hotel desk clerks, bus drivers, theatre ushers, shop sales assistants, flight attendants and petrol station attendants are also not tipped in Australia.

It is important not to offer to tip a public official, police officer or Government employee as this is against the law in Australia and may be considered an attempt to bribe the person.

Eating Out

Dining casually with friends usually involves sharing the cost of food or paying for your own food unless someone asks you out for dinner saying 'I would like to take you out for dinner' or 'I would like to invite you to have dinner with me.' When someone says 'would you like to have dinner together' or 'do you want to get something to eat' it means you pay for your own meal or, more commonly, split the bill equally. If you are not sure how the bill will be paid assume that you will be paying for your share. In a cafeteria or fast food restaurant the bill is paid as the food is ordered or as you get to the cash register after picking up the food you want to eat from the cafeteria line.

Making Requests

In Australia it is usual and expected that the person will say "please" and "thank you". Children are taught from an early age to use these words in making requests or when receiving assistance with reminders of the need for the 'magic word' if the child forgets to use "please" or "thank you".

Relationships between men and women

In Australia women are legally equal to men and there is equal employment and anti-discrimination legislation which seeks to facilitate women's full and equal involvement in society. Women speak freely to men and expect to be treated as equal colleagues in the workplace and as equals in society generally. Women 'date' or go out socially with men without necessarily intending to marry or have a sexual relationship. There are, of course, very varied customs within Australia due to the cultural diversity of the society. It is not easy to give clear guidelines for behaviour between men and women as this is seen as a matter that is agreed between the individuals concerned. To avoid misunderstandings, however, it is important to understand that women in Australia may speak and interact freely with a man with no intention or expectation of a personal relationship. When people of different cultures 'date' it is important to discuss with each other expectations and different values and beliefs to avoid misunderstandings. Every situation is different, and should be approached with consideration of the personal standards, values and sensitivities of the other person.

Social Customs

The world today is very international with people living, working and studying in countries other than their home country. Each country has its own customs and values which affect the social interactions and behaviours of the people of that country. When you arrive in Australia you will find many social customs which are different and will perhaps seem strange to you. If you understand the social customs of Australian society you will find it easier to interact and feel comfortable living in Australia. It is also helpful for Australian people to learn from you about the social customs of your country. The more people can understand each others' social customs and values, the more mutual benefit and cooperation can occur.

Australians value equality between people and consider as equal people of different status, wealth, authority and occupation. People speak politely to each other regardless of the person's status and there is little formal deference to people of higher status though these people are treated with respect. Men and women are considered equal in society and interact with each other in an informal manner.



Students outside Sydney University's Fisher Library

Australian women in general are relatively independent and expect to be treated as peers by their male colleagues or fellow students.

There are few servants in Australia as most Australians do their own household chores. Within a family the tasks are shared between children and adults, males and females.

People dress quite casually in Australia for most occasions. If more formal dress is required it will usually be indicated in advance. At University, you may notice that students and many academic staff dress casually and informally.



The courtyard inside The Holme Building is a popular eating and meeting place.

Sydney City and its Lifestyle

Sydney is situated on the south east coast of Australia with Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) 10 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). It is the capital of the state of New South Wales and the oldest city in Australia. It has grown from a small colony of 1000 convicts in Sydney Cove to the largest city in Australia with a population of 4 million people.

The city of Sydney combines a thriving business district with historic attractions from early settlement days sited around a magnificent harbour. It combines a variety of architectural styles from different eras, cultures and various nations. Sydney city streets are lined with old sandstone buildings best seen at The Rocks.

Sydney is a cosmopolitan city with people from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures. Groups and associations of almost every cultural, ethnic and religious identity can be found. The city also has many different spiritual centres for people to worship according to their own tradition.

Sydney has a dynamic arts and active cultural life with theatre, cinema, opera, dance and music performances throughout the year. The Festival of Sydney is held during January each year with many cultural events and street entertainment including many free performances for the public. International and Australian artists perform in Sydney at the many excellent venues including the Sydney Opera House and the Seymour Centre which is adjacent to the University of Sydney. Discount tickets are available to students at many venues.



The New South Wales Art Gallery and the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) house many works of Australian and international artists and hold international exhibitions throughout the year. There are also many other museums and galleries throughout Sydney for those wishing to explore local culture.

People in Sydney enjoy the beautiful Sydney Harbour which has many swimming bays and foreshore walking tracks, the splendid Botanic Gardens, Darling Harbour and The Rocks area. There are also surf beaches where you can swim, surf and stroll along the beach. While you are enjoying the water and surf, it is important to obey the rules and only swim between the flags where it is safe. Surf beaches can have high waves and strong currents or 'rips' which can carry swimmers out to sea.

Cruises and ferries leave Circular Quay regularly. Major attractions around the harbour and leading out to the ocean are Taronga Zoo, Manly, Darling Harbour and the Opera House. There are also many other organised tours throughout Sydney, the beaches and surrounding suburbs to help visitors soak in all the many sights this city has to offer.

Sydney's temperate climate makes it ideal for sporting and other outdoor recreational activities. Australians enjoy many sports including football, cricket, sailing, table tennis, basketball, volley ball, swimming, bushwalking, golf and squash. Less strenuous outdoor activities include walking in the parks along the harbour foreshore, enjoying outdoor entertainment at Circular Quay and Darling Harbour, lazing on the many beaches around Sydney and walking around the many markets in Sydney, Glebe, Paddington and other surrounding suburbs.

Winter sports include cross country and downhill skiing in the Australian Alps from July to October each year. There are special holiday ski packages and you can hire ski equipment and clothing if required.

There are many opportunities to participate in sport at the University of Sydney. More information can be obtained from Sydney University Sport on campus, as well as during the Orientation program.

Australians enjoy eating out in many of the fine restaurants available in Sydney. Restaurants cater for every taste with expensive elegant restaurants and cheaper restaurants, cafes and coffee shops. Sydney's cosmopolitan nature is reflected in the wide variety of ethnic restaurants providing the opportunity to

experience cuisine from around the world. There are many restaurants and coffee shops within walking distance of the main University campus. The University Union buildings on campus also provide a variety of food outlets including cafeterias, coffee shops and bars.

Find more information to prepare for your trip

If you have time, it would be to your advantage to find out as much as you can to help you prepare for your trip to Sydney, Australia, as a new international student. The more you know about Sydney and Australia, the easier it will be to adjust to the new and exciting challenges and experiences ahead of you. A listing of publications and internet websites that you may find useful is in the appendix at the end of this guide book.

Climate

The climate in Sydney is temperate with 342 days a year of sunshine on average. The wettest months are March to May; the coldest month is July and the hottest months are January and February. The average rainfall is 1200 millimetres (mm) per year. Average humidity is 62 percent.

Time

Sydney and NSW use Eastern Standard Time. In NSW Daylight Saving Time starts on the last Sunday in October and ends on the last Sunday in March. Clocks are turned forward one hour during this period.

The Australian Academic Year

The Australian academic year runs from the end of February to the end of November each year. There are two semesters during the academic year with a vacation period in June-July.

University of Sydney - Semester and Vacation Dates

First Semester	2005	2006
International Student Orientation	21-24 February	20-23 February
Lectures begin	7 March	6 March
Mid-Semester break	25 March-1 April	14 April-21 April
Study vacation	13-17 June	12-16 June
Examinations	20 June - 2 July	19 June - 1 July
Semester ends	2 July	1 July
Second Semester		
International Student Orientation	11-14 July	17 - 20 July
Lectures begin	25 July	24 July
Mid-Semester break	26-30 Sept	25-29 Sept
Study vacation	31 Oct -4 Nov	30 Oct -3 Nov
Examinations	7-19 November	6-18 November
Semester ends	19 November	18 November

New South Wales Public Holidays

	2005	2006	2007
New Year's Day	Sat, 1 January	Sun, 1 January	Mon, 1 January
Australia Day	Wed, 26 January	Thu, 26 January	Fri, 26 January
Good Friday	Fri, 25 March	Fri, 14 April	Fri, 6 April
Easter Saturday	Sat, 26 March	Sat, 15 April	Sat, 7 April
Easter Monday	Mon, 28 March	Mon, 17 April	Mon, 9 April
Anzac Day	Mon, 25 April	Tue, 25 April	Weds, 25 April
Queen's Birthday	Mon, 13 June	Mon, 12 June	Mon, 11 June
Labour Day	Mon, 3 October	Mon, 2 October	Mon, 1 October
Christmas Day	Mon, 26 December	Mon, 25 December	Tues, 25 December
Boxing Day	Tues, 27 December	Tues, 26 December	Wed, 26 December

The University of Sydney - Campuses

Camperdown/Darlington

- The Faculty of Arts www.arts.usyd.edu.au/
- The Faculty of Architecture www.arch.usyd.edu.au/
- The Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources www.agric.usyd.edu.au/
- The Faculty of Economics & Business www.econ.usyd.edu.au/
- The Faculty of Education & Social Work www.edsw.usyd.edu.au/
- The Faculty of Engineering www.eng.usyd.edu.au/
- The Faculty of Medicine www.medfac.usyd.edu.au/
- The Faculty of Pharmacy www.pharm.usyd.edu.au/
- The Faculty of Science www.science.usyd.edu.au/
- The Faculty of Veterinary Science (also at Camden) www.vetsci.usyd.edu.au/

Cumberland

- The Faculty of Health Sciences www.fhs.usyd.edu.au/

AGSM, Randwick

- The Australian Graduate School of Management www.agsm.edu.au

St James

- The Faculty of Law www.law.usyd.edu.au/

Mallett Street

- The Faculty of Nursing www.usyd.edu.au/nursing/
- The Centre for English Teaching www.usyd.edu.au/cet/
- The NHMRC Clinical Trials Centre www.ctc.usyd.edu.au/

Orange

- The Faculty of Rural Management www.oac.usyd.edu.au/
- The Centre for Regional Education, Orange (CREO) www.creo.usyd.edu.au/

Sydney Conservatorium of Music

- The Sydney Conservatorium of Music www.usyd.edu.au/conmusic/

Rozelle

- Sydney College of the Arts www.usyd.edu.au/sca/

Camden

- The Faculty of Veterinary Science (also Main Campus) www.vetsci.usyd.edu.au/
- The Faculty of Agriculture Food and Natural Resources www.agric.usyd.edu.au/

Surry Hills

- The Faculty of Dentistry www.dentistry.usyd.edu.au

Burren Street

- Institute of Transport Studies www.its.usyd.edu.au/
- Institute for International Health www.thegeorgeinstitute.org/