Australia

SUMMARY

Tropical Cyclone Trevor is affecting the Cape York Peninsula region of Queensland, the Gulf of Carpentaria and the Northern Territories bringing damaging winds, torrential rainfall and flooding. Severe Tropical Cyclone Veronica is expected to impact the northern coast of Western Australia also bringing flash flooding and damaging winds. In a life threatening emergency always dial 000, or for flood and storm emergencies dial 132 500. You can also seek assistance from the State Emergency Service.

Over 670,000 British nationals visit Australia every year. Most visits are trouble-free.

Australia is a vast country. You should plan journeys carefully, particularly if you’re travelling to remote areas, bushwalking or going swimming. See Local travel

There is a wider risk of tropical cyclones which occur, mainly in Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia between November and April. You should monitor the progress of approaching storms and follow the advice of local authorities, including the state emergency services and the Bureau of Meteorology. See Natural disasters.

Australia is prone to seasonal natural disasters including tropical cyclones, flash flooding, dust storms and bushfires (forest fires).

You’ll need to get a visa before you travel. See Entry requirements

If you’re on a working holiday visa you should be aware of your rights as employees in Australia and how to report any concerns about unfair or unlawful treatment. See Entry requirements

Terrorists are likely to try to carry out attacks in Australia. Australia’s current national terrorism threat level is ‘probable’ (see the Australian national terrorism threat advisory system). Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places visited by foreigners. You should be vigilant and take sensible precautions. See Terrorism
Take out comprehensive travel and medical insurance before you travel. Make sure this covers you for all activities you plan to do while in Australia, including manual labour if you’re backpacking; and adventure sports like bungee jumping, diving and paragliding.

If you’re abroad and you need emergency help from the UK government, contact the nearest British embassy, consulate or high commission.

The Overseas Business Risk service offers information and advice for British companies operating overseas on how to manage political, economic, and business security-related risks.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Crime

The level of crime is no higher than in the UK. Be careful with personal possessions and travel documents in cities and popular tourist destinations.

Avoid carrying everything in one bag. Don’t leave bags unattended in vehicles, internet cafes, pubs or clubs. Theft from safety deposit boxes is common in the cheaper hotels and hostels.

Be particularly vigilant at night in the busy tourist areas of Sydney like Kings Cross, down town George Street, Hyde Park and Centennial Park.

If you’re travelling in more remote areas, ask your hotel or hostel for advice on local safety information.

There have been some serious sexual assaults against British nationals in Australia. Alcohol and drugs can lead to you being less alert, less in control and less aware of your environment. If you are going to drink, know your limit. Drinks served in bars overseas are often stronger than those in the UK.

Beware of online lettings scams in which prospective tenants are asked to transfer a deposit to an overseas bank account in return for keys to a rental property in Australia. British travellers have fallen victim to these scams.

You can reduce the risk of losing your passport by getting a proof of age card. This is an accepted form of ID for many services like opening bank accounts or entering licensed premises. By getting a card soon after you arrive you will limit the need to carry your passport with you.
If your passport is lost or stolen you may be able to get an Emergency Travel Document (ETD) from the nearest British Consulate. However, we can only issue an ETD for urgent travel, not for general identity purposes. See Emergency Travel Documents.

Local travel

Australia is a huge country. If you’re bushwalking or exploring national parks it can take hours to get help in the event of an emergency. The terrain and intense heat can have a severe impact on your capabilities. Take plenty of water and a means of rigging up shelter from the sun. The NSW Police Force website provides further advice on bush safety, most of which applies throughout Australia.

Australia is home to a number of dangerous animal species, from crocodiles, jellyfish and sharks to venomous insects, spiders and snakes are found in many parts of the country. See the Wet Tropics Management Authority website.

The Tourism Australia website has extensive information on travelling around the continent. The Australian Government’s National Visitor Safety Handbook also contains comprehensive travel safety advice on Australia.

Swimming safety

Rip currents are the main surf hazard for all beach users. They can occur at any beach, and can sweep even the strongest swimmer out to sea. Rip currents are directly responsible for 20 coastal drowning deaths and over 15,000 rescues in Australia each year (source: Surf Life Saving Australia). There are more British victims than any other foreign nationality, with as many as 400 British nationals rescued and up to 4 drowning each year.

Take the following simple precautions:

- always swim between the red and yellow flags - these indicate it is a supervised location where a lifesaving service is currently on duty.
- don’t swim at unsupervised locations.
- read the safety signs - they indicate current and typical hazards for that location.
- ask a lifeguard for advice - they are there to provide safety advice and make your experience safe and enjoyable.
- always swim with a friend; never alone.
- if you get into trouble, stay calm and attract attention by calling and waving your arm above your head.
Never swim after drinking alcohol or taking drugs - they impair your ability and judgement in the water. Further guidance on beach safety is available on the SLS website.

Rivers and pools can be subject to sudden flash flooding as a result of heavy rain elsewhere in the area. There have been cases of British nationals being injured by diving into water which was too shallow. Make sure that there is sufficient depth of water before diving, and always follow warning signs if present.

**Diving safety**

There have been several snorkelling accidents involving British nationals and other foreign tourists, some of them fatal. You are required by law to complete a medical declaration for resort diving or snorkelling – these, and more detailed advice, can be found on the Workplace Health & Safety Queensland website.

For your own health and safety, you must be truthful about any medical conditions you have.

**Road travel**

You can drive in Australia using your UK driving licence as long as you remain a temporary overseas visitor; your UK licence is valid; you haven’t been disqualified from driving anywhere; and your licence is not suspended or cancelled, or your visiting driving privileges withdrawn.

If you intend to stay in Australia and you hold a permanent visa, you can drive using your UK licence for a maximum of 3 months. To continue driving, you must get a local licence within this 3 month period.

You must carry your driving licence and passport when driving. Make sure you have sufficient insurance, including if you borrow a car from a friend or relative. Hire car insurance often doesn’t cover driving on unsealed roads; check your policy before you set off.

In 2016 there were 1,293 road deaths in Australia. This equates to 5.3 road deaths per 100,000 of population and compares to the UK average of 2.8 road deaths per 100,000 of population in 2016.

Driving laws and regulations differ in each state/territory. Driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs is illegal. The penalties can be severe. You must wear a seat belt at all times.

If you’re hiring a car immediately on arrival be extra careful - you will be jetlagged and tired from your flight. Take regular rest breaks when driving long distances; there are many rest stops provided.
Prepare thoroughly if driving in remote outback areas, which can present unexpected hazards. Ensure you have a roadworthy vehicle fitted with GPS and two spare tyres. Take good maps and extra food, water and fuel. Plan your route carefully and seek local advice before you set out. Leave your route details and expected time of return with the local tourist authorities, police, your hotel/hostel, or friends and relatives and let them know when you’ve arrived safely.

Check road conditions before beginning your journey; stay with your vehicle if it breaks down; and avoid travelling in extreme heat conditions. Sudden storms and strong winds can make driving difficult. Take particular care when driving on unsealed roads, 4WD tracks and desert/beach roads. Northern Territory Police have in the past warned tourists to stay off unsealed tracks in remote areas of Central Australia following reports of stranded motorists.

Following a number of serious accidents, all vehicles on Fraser Island must observe a maximum speed of 80km/h on beaches and 30km/h in towns. 4WD vehicles must carry no more than 8 occupants (including the driver) and all luggage must be carried inside the vehicle. Avoid driving at night and be aware of beach hazards like ditches created by the surf. Fraser Island is unique but remote, and emergency services can take many hours to reach an accident. Carry a well-stocked first-aid kit and personal medication as there is no pharmacy on the island.

Mobile phones

The mobile phone network generally works well in cities and large towns but coverage elsewhere can be very limited or nonexistent. If you’re travelling to remote areas, check with your phone provider about coverage. You can use your UK mobile phone in Australia if global roaming has been activated, but making and receiving calls can be expensive. Many visitors prefer to buy an Australian SIM card on arrival. Australian SIM cards are available at some Australian airports, and at convenience stores and supermarkets.

Political situation

Keep up to date with local and international developments and avoid any demonstrations or large gatherings of people.

TERRORISM

Terrorists are likely to try to carry out attacks in Australia. Attacks could be indiscriminate including in places visited by foreigners. You should be vigilant, keep up to date with local media reports and follow the advice of local authorities.

On 9 November 2018, a person was killed and several were injured in a terrorist incident in Bourke Street, Melbourne.

On 5 June 2017, a person was shot dead and another taken hostage in Melbourne.
On 2 October 2015, a gun attack outside the New South Wales Police headquarters in Sydney killed one person in an act of terrorism. The Australian authorities have successfully disrupted a number of planned attacks and made several arrests.

On 26 November 2015, the Australian Government changed its national terrorism threat advisory system. Australia’s current national terrorism threat level is ‘probable’. There have been a number of attacks and disruptions linked to Daesh (formerly referred to as ISIL) - inspired terrorism.

There’s a heightened threat of terrorist attack globally against UK interests and British nationals, from groups or individuals motivated by the conflict in Iraq and Syria. You should be vigilant at this time.

Find out more about the global threat from terrorism, how to minimise your risk and what to do in the event of a terrorist attack.

**LOCAL LAWS AND CUSTOMS**

The Australian authorities will take action against anyone who imports or is found to be trafficking illegal drugs. Prosecution can lead to a lengthy jail sentence and deportation.

The legality of using e-cigarettes in Australia differs between states. Liquid nicotine is classed as a poison and banned from sale nationwide, however some states allow importation for personal use and the use of e-cigarettes without nicotine. You should seek local advice on what restrictions are in place at your destination.

Australian federal law changed on 7 December 2017 to recognise same-sex marriages. Overseas same-sex marriages predating this were recognised immediately and domestic Australian same-sex marriages will commence from 8 January 2018. Australia has an established tradition of tolerance towards homosexuality, but there are still isolated incidents of homophobic crimes. Take care when visiting rural communities. The Visit Gay Australia website is a useful travel planning resource and you can find more detail on LGBT issues on the Australian Human Rights Commission website. See our information and advice page for the LGBT community before you travel.

**Quarantine**

Australia has strict quarantine rules in order to keep out pests and diseases that could affect plant, animal and human health. All luggage is x-rayed on arrival. Any items of concern are further inspected, treated and if necessary confiscated and destroyed. Breaches of quarantine regulations can result in large fines.

You will be given an incoming passenger card on the plane, on which you must declare any food or goods of plant or animal origin, including nuts, dried fruit and vegetables, herbs and spices, biscuits, cakes and confectionery, teas, coffees and milk-based drinks and sporting equipment (including camping gear). A full list can be found on the Department of Agriculture website.
You will also be asked to declare whether you have ‘visited a rural area, or been in contact with, or near, farm animals outside Australia in the past 30 days’.

**Taxes**

Different tax rules and rates apply to residents and non-residents. Working holidaymakers are usually regarded as non-resident for tax purposes; this means they don’t qualify for any tax-free personal allowance on their earnings. Further advice on [residency for tax purposes](#) and [income tax rates](#) is available from the Australian Taxation Office website.

**ENTRY REQUIREMENTS**

The information on this page covers the most common types of travel and reflects the UK government’s understanding of the rules currently in place. Unless otherwise stated, this information is for travellers using a full ‘British Citizen’ passport.

The authorities in the country or territory you’re travelling to are responsible for setting and enforcing the rules for entry. If you’re unclear about any aspect of the entry requirements, or you need further reassurance, you’ll need to contact the [embassy, high commission or consulate](#) of the country or territory you’re travelling to.

You should also consider checking with your transport provider or travel company to make sure your passport and other travel documents meet their requirements.

**Visas**

You need a visa to travel to Australia. British citizens can get the following types of electronic visitor visa:

- eVisitor visa direct from the [Department of Immigration & Border Protection](https://www.immi.gov.au). There is no visa application charge or service fee for this;
- Electronic Travel Authority (ETA) via your travel agent or airline. There is no visa application charge, but a service fee of A$20 applies.

Information on all other types of visa is available from [the Department of Immigration & Border Protection](https://www.immi.gov.au), or from the [Australian High Commission](https://www.gov.uk/government/world/australia) in London.

In certain circumstances you may be asked to undergo a health examination before a visa can be granted, for example if you are aged 75 years or older. Factor in extra time for this when applying for a visa.

On arrival you may be asked to provide evidence of funds to support your stay and a return or onward ticket.
If you hold an ePassport you can use SmartGate to pass through passport control when arriving in Australia. See Department of Immigration & Border Protection.

**Working holiday visas**

If you’re on a working holiday visa you should be aware of your rights as employees in Australia and how to report any concerns about unfair or unlawful treatment.

Thousands of British working holiday makers travel to Australia each year with the vast majority enjoying their stay without issue. Working conditions, accommodation and medical facilities are generally of a good standard.

In October 2016 the Fair Work Ombudsman published a report following an inquiry into the wages and conditions of people working under the working holiday visa program, which highlighted exploitative workplace cultures where unreasonable and unlawful requirements were being imposed in some isolated and remote workplaces. If you have concerns about your workplace conditions or treatment you can contact the Fair Work Ombudsman on 13 13 94. You can also report concerns to them anonymously.

If you feel you’re being treated unfairly or unlawfully by an employer, you can email the UK’s National Crime Agency (NCA) at: [Australia.WHVreferrals@fco.gov.uk](mailto:Australia.WHVreferrals@fco.gov.uk). The NCA is working with a number of Australian authorities to help identify and address any illegal employer behaviour affecting British nationals.

For further information and advice, see our [working holiday makers booklet](http://www.gov.uk/working-holiday-makers).

**Passport validity**

For entry into Australia, your passport should be valid for the proposed duration of your stay. No additional period of validity beyond this is required.

If you are transiting another country on your way to or from Australia, make sure you check the entry requirements for that country. Many countries will only permit entry if you have at least 6 months validity remaining on your passport.

**Dual nationals**

If you’re a British national living in Australia with Australian citizenship, or you’re a dual national, you should leave and enter Australia on your Australian passport, otherwise you may face difficulties and delays. For more information, see the [Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade’s website](http://www.gov.au/).
Yellow fever certificate requirements

Check whether you need a yellow fever certificate by visiting the National Travel Health Network and Centre's TravelHealthPro website.

UK Emergency Travel Documents

UK Emergency Travel Documents are valid for entry into, transit through, and exit from Australia.

HEALTH

At least 8 weeks before your trip, check the latest country-specific health advice from the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) on the TravelHealthPro website. Each country-specific page has information on vaccine recommendations, any current health risks or outbreaks, and factsheets with information on staying healthy abroad. Guidance is also available from NHS (Scotland) on the FitForTravel website.

General information on travel vaccinations and a travel health checklist is available on the NHS website. You may then wish to contact your health adviser or pharmacy for advice on other preventive measures and managing any pre-existing medical conditions while you’re abroad.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in the UK can be different in other countries. If you’re travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on best practice when travelling with medicines. For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you’ll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you’re travelling to.

Make sure you arrange comprehensive medical insurance before you travel to Australia. If you’re not covered under the reciprocal healthcare arrangements which exist between Australia and the UK, costs of treatment can be high.

The standard of healthcare in Australia is very good. Under the reciprocal healthcare arrangements, British citizens resident in the UK and travelling on a British passport are entitled to limited subsidised health services from Medicare for medically necessary treatment while visiting Australia. This does not cover pre-existing conditions, or treatment that does not require prompt attention. These provisions do not apply to non-visitors, for example those who are studying in Australia. Other exclusions under the reciprocal agreement include pharmaceuticals when not a hospital in-patient, use of ambulance services and medical evacuations, which are very expensive.
Two outbreaks of hepatitis A have been reported in the states of New South Wales and Victoria. For more information and advice, see the TravelHealthPro website.

If you need emergency medical assistance during your trip, dial 000 and ask for an ambulance. You should contact your insurance/medical assistance company promptly if you are referred to a medical facility for treatment.

**NATURAL DISASTERS**

**Bushfires**

Be aware of the risk of bushfires, especially at the height of the Australian summer (November to February). Bushfires can start and change direction with little or no notice. If you’re travelling in a high risk bushfire area, follow local authorities’ advice. For the latest bushfire information, see: Victoria; South Australia; New South Wales, Tasmania, Western Australia, Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. The New South Wales rural fire service also has a useful ‘Fires Near Me’ app.

**Flooding**

Heavy rain and tropical cyclones can cause flooding in some areas. Follow local media and check with local state authorities for the latest flooding information: Queensland and New South Wales.

**Tropical cyclones**

Tropical Cyclones occur in some parts of Australia, mainly Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia. The Cyclone season normally runs from November to April.

Monitor local and international weather updates from the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology website for updates. See our Tropical cyclones page for advice about what to do if you’re caught up in a storm.

**Dust storms**

Dust storms occur regularly in Australia, usually only in outback areas.