

English plus sport in Australia

The wide availability of English language plus sports courses in Australia enables international students to experience the country's local culture as well as reap the benefits of an active outdoor lifestyle.

Due to its mild climate and outdoor culture, Australia offers an ideal environment to encourage participation in a wide variety of different sports. Surfing in particular has a culture all of its own and few Australian children who live within reach of a surf beach will grow up without having experienced this exhilarating sport at some time. For many language students visiting Australia, this aspect of the Australian way of life is particularly attractive and language plus sports programmes have been an established part of some language schools' portfolios for a number of years.

"We've been offering various [language plus sports] programmes for the last 10 years," says Ian Pratt, Director of the Sunshine Coast English College in Noosa, QLD. "Students who travel to Noosa are looking to take advantage of the natural features of the area such as year-round warm weather, incredible beaches, world-class surfing and outstanding diving opportunities. It seems a natural extension to our English programmes to offer courses that take advantage of these natural assets to the area."

Making use of their location is also the reason that Brown's School of English in Southport, QLD, developed its language plus sports courses one year ago, according to Richard Brown. "It's a sports person's paradise," he says. "As a surfer myself, who has visited some of the best breaks around the world, I can honestly say that the Gold Coast is about as good as it gets. The [area] hosts the Quicksilver Pro every year which attracts all of the best surfers from around the world."

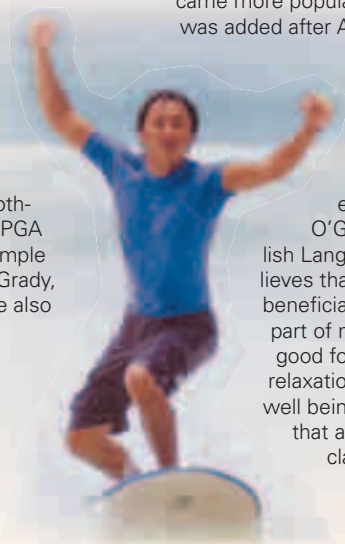
As well as offering idyllic conditions for surfing and scuba diving, Australia also has impressive facilities for other sports too, such as golf. "Some of Australia's leading PGA [Professional Golfers' Association] professionals, for example Greg Norman, Karrie Webb, Ian Baker-Finch and Wayne Grady, all started their golf in Queensland," asserts Brown. "We also have some of the finest PGA teaching professionals."

Professional coaching in a sport of their choice is a great attraction for students really wanting to make the most of their time in Australia. The Australian International College of Language in Southport, QLD, offers an English and professional sport course, which lasts for up to two years and is for students "who are focused on achieving professional status in their chosen sport," according to Garth Keppie at the school.

All the sports coaching in this course is with professionally trained and qualified instructors. "For example, English and golf is offered with a PGA professional golfing coach," relates Keppie. "Or English and swimming with a professional coach who has trained some of the Australian Olympic swim team."

With so many sports to choose from, language schools that started off offering programmes in one sport, such as surfing, have often gone on to develop a whole range of courses. Tim Eckenfels, Director of Marketing at International House Sydney, which is situated on the famous Manly surf beach, says that English plus surfing courses have been available at the school since it was founded in 1988. "Because of our location on the beach we originally offered only surfing. Golf, tennis and diving were added as these sports became more popular around the globe. Sailing was added after Australia won the America's cup," he adds.

Australia's continued international sporting prowess can only add to the attractiveness of English plus sports courses in the future, and Michael O'Grady from Byron Bay English Language School in NSW believes that such courses can be very beneficial. "[Surfing] is an integral part of my lifestyle and is fun, a good form of physical exercise, relaxation and adds to a person's well being. For a student, I believe that after three or four hours in a classroom they need to get outside into some physical activity. It compliments the learning process." ●



Selection of programmes available

Location	Name of institution	Min. no. of start dates	Min. stay in weeks	Min. age	Sports offered
Adelaide, SA	SA Adelaide Language Centre	yr	2	12	g,f,t
Bald Hills, QLD	St Paul's International School	tt	10	12	g,sw
Bondi Beach, NSW	Bondi Beach English Study	12	1	18	f,g,h,s
Brisbane, QLD	Griffith University English Language Institute	9	5	18	g
Burleigh Heads, QLD	Burleigh Heads Language Centre	yr	1	18	b,d,s,w
Byron Bay, NSW	Byron Bay English Language School	yr	2	16	s
Cairns, QLD	International House Queensland	yr	2	16	d
Cannonvale, QLD	SACE Whitsundays College of English	yr	4	16	d,sa
Gold Coast, QLD	Bond University English Language Institute	yr	2	16	f,g,s,sw,t

Location	Name of institution	Min. no. of start dates	Min. stay in weeks	Min. age	Sports offered
Melbourne, VIC	Melbourne Lang. Centre & Stotts College	2	n	18	s
Noosa, QLD	Sunshine Coast English College	yr	2	16	d,g,h,s
Perth, WA	Edith Cowan University, IEC	yr	-	-	d,sa
Port Douglas, QLD	Regent Australia English Language Centre	yr	1	16	d,g,h
Southport, QLD	Australian Int. College of Languages	yr	n	14	v
Southport, QLD	Brown's English Language School	yr	2	18	d,g,s,t
Sydney, NSW	International House Sydney	yr	v	14	d,g,s,sa,t
various	Australian College of English	yr	2	16	d,g,s,t

b body boarding d scuba diving g golf f football h horse riding n none sw swimming s surfing sa sailing t tennis tt during term time only v varies w watersports yr year round