



Australia's east coast

Students visiting Australia's east coast are assured of a friendly reception, a great climate and an outdoors lifestyle, while there are many highlights and attractions to explore, as AMY BAKER finds out.

Students might not be aware how multicultural Australia is and how diverse our society is," says Beth Brice of Study Group in Australia. "The highlight of their stay seems to be to mix and make friends with students of varying nationalities [as well as] Australians."

Many schools on the east coast are keen to point out the friendly reception that international students will receive from Australians and the cosmopolitan learning environment in which they can study. Australia's eastern coastline is a popular region with international visitors, encompassing attractions such as the country's unofficial capital of culture, Sydney, the prime beach locations of the Gold Coast and Surfers

Paradise, the "tropical north" of Queensland and the cosmopolitan city of Melbourne in Victoria.

Cairns, one of the main access points to the famous Great Barrier Reef in Queensland, is a popular language travel destination. The city offers some of the best scuba diving conditions in the world,

according to Michelle Kym Craig, International Marketing Manager at Cairns College of English, who adds that it has "a year round warm sunny climate, warm and friendly locals and a friendly atmosphere". She continues, "There is an abundance of



Skiing in the Snowy Mountains
Surprisingly perhaps, there are good skiing and snowboarding opportunities in winter, from July to September. The Snowy Mountains straddle the New South Wales and Victoria border

bars and nightclubs and there are many international students living here so making friends is easy." As well as excellent swimming beaches just north of the city, Cairns' urban design makes it a great outdoor city year round. The Esplanade near the harbour is a central meeting point, where students

can stroll, fly a kite, relax on the grass or share a barbecue or picnic with friends.

It is not only Cairns that offers access to the Great Barrier Reef. At James Cook University in Townsville, the English Language Centre organises trips to the reef and

Agent viewpoint



"Our clients prefer to study on Australia's east coast because we visit east coast cities every year with groups of students [on a] vacation tour.

There is no time difference with our region, as we live [in the] the far east of Russia on the border with China and Korea. Favourite destinations are Brisbane and the Gold Coast – our students prefer not so large cities [and] they like water activities very much. [Also] the

education in Brisbane and Gold Coast is cheaper than in Sydney. Our students like to spend their free time having fun. They like surfing, diving, water activities, swimming, fishing and so on."

Evgeniya Samoylenko, VIP Service International, Russia



"Most students like the east coast of Australia because of our adventure course that includes accommodation in a

family, excursions to the Blue Mountains and [seminars about] Australia. For students, going to Australia is like an adventure, because they may not return again. They usually [like to stay in] Sydney, or near Sydney, because it's a big city. They want to visit the country and do as many things as possible while they are there. Students usually have a very good time, with nice weather and people!"

Emilio Bordona, Interway, Spain



Fitzroy Island on the Great Barrier Reef (above); a Chinese festival (right)



diving opportunities for students. There are also excursions arranged for students to local places of interest. “We take students to our wonderful zoo, for example, called Billabong Wildlife Sanctuary,” relates Brigitte Pfeiffer at the centre.

“There are many animals in their natural [habitats] such as crocodiles and wombats [and] there are also indigenous Aboriginal rangers who talk about their life and culture.”

As in many other Australian cities, Townsville promotes its city centre facilities that enable students to enjoy the warm climate. “We have a beautiful strand [promenade] that has recently been rebuilt



and refurbished,” says Pfeiffer, “which is similar to Nice in France, with lots of shops, cafés and restaurants.” Claire Stevens at the Australian College of English, which has centres in both Sydney and Brisbane on the east coast, emphasises the outdoor appeal of many cities. “Many of our students love to go to the beach, surf, swim or just enjoy the many outdoor cafés and restaurants throughout Sydney and Brisbane,” she says. “Both cities are ideal for enjoying an outdoor lifestyle.”

Brisbane, state capital of Queensland, is well placed for students keen to visit some of Queensland’s most popular tourist attractions. One port of call for many is Fraser Island, the world’s largest sand island, which was added to the World Heritage List in 1993. In the mid-1970s, Fraser Island was the subject of power struggle between con-

servationists and a sand mining company, which the conservationists won. Students can explore the beautiful sandy island, 120 kilometres long and 15 kilometres wide, on foot or with a 4WD vehicle.

Nearer to home, other attractions include the Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary, where alongside the other Australian wildlife, the star attractions are the koalas. Visitors can have their picture taken hugging them.

Brisbane itself is dotted with parks, allowing visitors to enjoy the warm climate of Australia’s largest city in the subtropics – roughly the same distance from the Equator as Miami and Johannesburg. Moreton Bay and Islands are the city’s playground, and here, students can try sand tobogganing, water sports and feeding wild dolphins.

Near Brisbane is the Gold Coast, which, according to Cherry Huang, at Gold Coast



“Students choose the east coast of Australia because they can improve their English in a similar environment to Brazil, with sun, beaches and nice people. They usually prefer Sydney or Brisbane and they like to travel around a lot, and visit Cairns and Sydney if they are in Brisbane, or vice versa. At night they like to go to pubs and casinos, as in Brazil there are no casinos.”
Marilisa F. de Almeida, True Way, Brazil

College of Business, is “one of the best tourist destinations in the world”. A 35-kilometre strip of beaches fronted by resorts, theme parks and high-rise development, the Gold Coast boasts daytime temperatures above 22 degrees for 279 days a year. “Our college provides high quality English and vocational courses for both locals and international [students] and they can enjoy their [time here] in a nice and fun environment,” says Huang.

Further down the coast is Sydney, which may not have the same quality of beaches, but which has unrivalled night-life and a busy cultural calendar. For many, Sydney sums up Australia’s modern urban lifestyle, with the famous Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras and countless shops, bars, muse-

ums, art galleries and clubs. Luke Icarus Simon, Associate Director, International at the University of Western Sydney, says, “Many of our students travel to the [city centre] at the weekend, with Chinatown being a very popular destination, as are the clubs, bars and discos on Oxford Street and Kings Cross.” He adds, “Students also enjoy many ferry rides around the harbour too.”

Some of Sydney’s tourist attractions include the famous opera house, the old historical area called the Rocks and the famous harbour bridge, which students can climb. Living costs are slightly

“One of our students is a member of a local surf life saving club and comes to our college to study English. This Japanese gentleman is a lifeguard in Japan and he has come to train in Australia. He has appeared on the local news and is a very interesting character. The other day, he went swimming in the ocean and wondered why nobody was in with him. He asked his teacher why and she told him that the beaches were closed because of the sharks! It’s a good thing that he is a fast swimmer.”

Cherry Huang, Gold Coast College of Business

higher in Sydney than in other areas of Australia, but there are a variety of options for students to consider. The University of Western Sydney is in a “beautiful bushland setting surrounded by rolling green hills,” explains Simon, and students can reach downtown Sydney from there by train in less than an hour. There are other locations too that offer easy access to Sydney while promising a quieter living experience.

One such destination is Newcastle, further up the east coast towards Brisbane. “[We offer] a beach experience in a medium-sized city,” says Seamus Fagan at the University of Newcastle’s Department for English Language and Foundation Studies. “We have easy access to beaches, wineries [and] Port Stephens for dolphin watching.” Another advantage for students based at the university is a well-developed “buddy system” that involves the university and people from the local community.

Gosford, slightly nearer Sydney, is another English language learning destination that students can consider. “Magill College [in Gosford] offers a ‘near Sydney’ regional experience,” explains Chris Magill at the school, “whereby our host families offer excellence in their caring and willingness to genuinely welcome overseas students. Gosford is a beautiful seaside and na-



The Twelve Apostles, Victoria
A famous landmark along the Great Ocean Road, the Twelve Apostles are huge stone pillars rising out of the ocean. Formed over millions of years, they can be seen from many viewing platforms

tional park area, [so] students enjoy the area’s open space and beauty.”

From around Sydney, students can visit key attractions of New South Wales, such as the Blue Mountains and the Hunter Valley wine region. At the Australian College of English, Stevens says such excursions are organised for students as part of the school’s Boomerang programme, which also

includes themed parties and sporting events.

The Australian Capital Territory, where Canberra is situated, is located within New South Wales, and Canberra offers students an interesting glimpse into national life and some of the best museums and galleries in the country, such as the National Gallery. Situated on top of Capital Hill with its landmark 81-metre flagmast, Parliament House is another key attraction. The modern building cost US\$1.1 billion and took eight years to build, opening in 1988.

Below Canberra and New South Wales is the southern state of Victoria. Here, regional capital, Melbourne, is proud of its multicultural credentials. “Melbourne is sometimes said to be the cultural capital of Australia and is perhaps more cosmopolitan than any other city in Australia,” says Angela Moran, Director of Studies at Ames International. At Melbourne’s William Angliss Institute of Tafe, Carmell Casely underlines the influence of Melbourne’s cultural mix on annual events in the city. “Melbourne’s population means there are many community or cultural festivals showcasing the cuisine, fashion and culture of a variety of countries,” she says.

Melbourne offers access to many regional attractions, including the famous Great Ocean Road, which stretches for over 300 kilometres from Torquay, near Geelong, to Warrnambool. The road, promising some of Australia’s most spectacular coastal scenery, took 14 years to build and was established as a tribute to the soldiers who died in World War I. Moran sums up a key element of Melbourne’s appeal. “The people are friendly and the city is the gateway to some of Australia’s most rugged coastline, including Bells Beach, [which is] famous for its international surfing events.”



Australian Open, Melbourne
Taking place in January each year at Melbourne Park, the Australian Open is one of the four Grand Slam tennis tournaments in the world. Last year, over half a million people attended over two weeks