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The State capital is perhaps best known abroad for the Opera House, a building whose distinctive shape is echoed by the sails of the boats in the almost equally famous harbour. Sydney's port is one of the leading centers of intercontinental trade in the Asia-Pacific region. The central business district is the site of Sydney's most important historic buildings, many of which are well-preserved examples of the 19th-century building boom.



TRANSPORTATION

A wide range of commuting options are available. With a well-integrated transportation system, Sydney is easy to move around in. The Cityrail & Countrylink trains can take you to any part of New South Wales or Australia. The monorail runs in a loop linking the city to Darling Harbour & its tourist attractions. Lightrail operates 24 hours a day. Taxis are available at all hours and can be found at taxi ranks (stands) or hailed on the street. You will pay a small extra charge for telephone bookings.



BANKS & CURRENCY

Banking hours are Monday to Thursday 9:30am - 4:00pm and Friday 9:30am - 5:00pm. Australia's currency consists of coins of five, 10, 20 and 50 cent and one and two dollar denomination; and notes of five, 10, 20, 50 and 100 dollar denomination.



TELEPHONES

Country Direct is a service that lets you speak with an operator in your home country or you can use an automated service. To ring North America from Australia, dial 0011 + 1 + area code + phone number. Local calls from Telstra public payphones are untimed and charged at 40 cents.



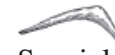
EATING

Sydney is a gourmet paradise, with an abundance of fresh seafood, a vast range of vegetables and fruit always in season, and prime meats at inexpensive prices. Avoid the takeout booths among the ferry wharves at Circular Quay with the exception of Quay Seafoods, it serves up some of the best French fries in Sydney.



PLACES TO VISIT

The Australian Museum, founded in 1827 and the country's first museum, contains natural history and anthropology exhibits. The Sydney Opera House is the centerpiece of the city's venues for live performances of ballet, opera, and classical music. The turbulent history of Sydney from 1788 to 1850, including the effects of European colonization on the Aboriginal population, is the subject of multimedia exhibits at the Museum of Sydney.



SHOPPING

Special purchases include excellent local wines; wool, clothing, leather and sheepskin products; opal and other precious or semi-precious stones. Many cities and towns have small shops devoted to the sale of 'Australia', where souvenirs ranging from T-shirts to boomerangs, can be bought. Most stores are 9:00am to 5:30pm Monday to Friday and 9:00am to 5:00pm on Saturday.



CLIMATE

Australia is in the southern hemisphere and the seasons are opposite to those in North America.

October/March (spring-summer): Warm to hot with mild nights.

April/September (autumn-winter): Cool days with occasional rain but still plenty of sun.

Snow is totally confined to mountainous regions of the southeast.



GENERAL INFO.

To call for ambulance, fire or police, dial 000.

United States Embassy: (6) 62 70 50 00.
Sydney Convention & Visitors Bureau (0171) 431 4045.

Post offices are open 9:00am to 5:00pm Monday-Friday. Stamps are often available at hotel and motel reception areas and selected newsagents.