

Australia

Business Guide

Compiled by:

Consulate General of Switzerland, Sydney

Sydney, August 2015

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Business travellers generally enter Australia via [Sydney](#), [Melbourne](#), [Brisbane](#), [Adelaide](#) and [Perth](#) and to a far lesser extent [Cairns](#) and [Darwin](#). [Canberra](#) is the capital city of Australia and its political hub, but the biggest business hubs remain Sydney and Melbourne respectively.

Before your departure, please note that most countries require you to be in possession of a passport that is valid for six months beyond the period of your intended stay. Check the expiry date of your travel documents in due time before departure and make sure that there are enough free pages in your passport for the entry/exit stamps of the countries you are visiting. For Swiss citizens, passport applications are made via the internet at www.schweizerpass.ch. Please organise travel insurance.

The changing face of border protection in Australia: On 1 July 2015, the functions of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service were integrated into a new Department: The [Department of Immigration and Border Protection](#). The [Australian Border Force](#) was established as the new front-line operational agency within the Department reflecting a greater focus on the border as a strategic national asset. Also new from 1 September 2015 visa holders will no longer be able to request and pay for a visa label. Visa holders can access their visa record through the free [Visa Entitlement Verification Online \(VEVO\)](#) service or the myVEVO mobile app.

Immigration in Australia is generally a fast and efficient process. However, because there is a government mandated curfew operating at most major airports between 11pm and 6am¹, there can sometimes be longer wait times when the first morning flights arrive. Give yourself enough time if planning any meetings immediately after arrival. A [visa](#) is required for entry into Australia. Visas are issued by the [Department of Immigration and Border Protection](#) and depend on your country of origin and length of stay. Business travellers and holders of a Swiss passport must obtain an [eVisitor visa](#) prior to departure. Please read the terms and conditions of this class of visa and know that the length of stay is limited to 3 months. Please also consult the Immigration website [here](#) for more info.

Health certificate requirements for entry into Australia - arriving from certain destinations only: As part of your immigration clearance you will be requested to state which countries you visited prior to arriving in Australia. Any person over one year of age must hold an individual international yellow fever vaccination certificate if they have stayed overnight or longer in a declared yellow fever infected country within six days prior to their arrival in Australia. Yellow fever vaccinations must be provided by an approved yellow fever vaccination clinic. These clinics will provide a vaccination certificate in the form approved by the World Health Organisation (WHO), and completed according to WHO requirements. A yellow fever vaccination begins its validity 10 days after vaccination occurred and the certificate is currently valid for ten years, although changes in this regard will enter into force legally in June 2016. To find out more read [here](#).

Australian Customs: When arriving from overseas you will need to clear both immigration and [customs](#). All travellers arriving into Australia are required to complete an [incoming passenger card](#) (translations into different languages can be found on the link provided). This is a legally binding document² declaring what you are bringing into the country. Due to, amongst other things, its unique biodiversity, Australia has very strict laws in relation to the items you can bring into the country. For a complete list of items which are prohibited or restricted or to check limits for duty free items or alcohol and tobacco/cigarettes, please consult the Border Protection website [here](#) or the Department of Agriculture regarding biosecurity [here](#). Non-compliance will attract criminal or administrative sanctions.

If you want to purchase duty free items when travelling internationally you need to be aware that these items (if packed in your carry-on baggage) are subject to the same restrictions as other liquids, aerosols and gels. Australia applies restrictions for flights both to and from Australia. For more information on liquids, please consult the Australian Government website [here](#).

Similarly, once you leave Australia you will also be required to complete an [outgoing passenger card](#).

¹ Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development & Local Government

² Migration Act 1958 (the Migration Act) and the Migration Regulations 1994 (the Migration Regulations).

Further, regarding your departure from Australia, please note that the [Tourist Refund Scheme](#) (TRS) lets you claim a refund of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and Wine Equalisation Tax (WET) that you pay on certain goods (value) you buy in Australia and then take out of Australia within your checked luggage or carry-on bags. To make processing your claim faster at your port of departure, you can pre-enter the details of your claim using the TRS web or [mobile applications](#) (apps).

You may also want to refer to www.eda.admin.ch/reisehinweise for further information on travel.

LANGUAGES USED FOR BUSINESS

The language used for business in Australia is English. While generally intelligible, there are a lot of very unique Australian expressions, which can be confusing to non-native speakers. Just ask if there is something you do not understand! Even at an important business level Australians are generally helpful and will take pleasure in explaining the colloquial jargon. For a short history about Australian English and slang click [here](#).

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Australia's National Public Holidays are: New Year's Day, Australia Day (26 January), Good Friday, Easter Monday, Anzac Day (25 April), Christmas Day and Boxing Day (26 December). All other public holidays such as Queen's Birthday and Labour Day are individually declared by the state and territory governments. Further information on public holidays by State and Territory can be found [here](#).

HEALTH AND INOCULATIONS

Other than the Yellow Fever requirements listed earlier, there are no compulsory health requirements for your arrival into Australia. However, travellers should seek medical advice regarding vaccinations for their individual medical circumstances prior to travelling to Australia and for the duration of their business trip. For further information you can also consult the Swiss health department [BAG](#) or the travel health association [Safe Travel](#) prior to departure from Switzerland. Should you need to bring any medicine in to Australia please consult the website of the [Department of Health Therapeutic Goods Administration](#) for more information.

The emergency services (police, fire, ambulance) number in Australia is 000 (Zero-Zero-Zero).

Please ensure that you have travel health insurance and are adequately covered for any medical, emergency or other expenses while travelling in Australia.

TIME ZONES

Most of Australia uses three standard time zones, however, a total of nine distinct time zones are used by Australia and the external territories. The standard three are:

Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) which is UTC/GMT +10 (Sydney, Melbourne)

Australian Central Standard Time (ACST) which is UTC/GMT +9 1/2 (Adelaide)

Australian Western Time (ASWT) which is UTC/GMT +8 (Perth)

TIME DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SWITZERLAND AND AUSTRALIA

Note: Daylight savings time is the same as “summer time” i.e. when the clocks change during Australian daylight saving time – Australia’s AEST area is 10 hours ahead of Switzerland during Australian normal time – Australia’s AEST area is 8 hours ahead of Switzerland

Daylight saving time in New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (VIC), Australian Capital Territory (ACT), South Australia (SA) and Tasmania (TAS) generally starts on the first Sunday in October and ends on the first Sunday in April. Queensland (QLD), Northern Territory (NT) and Western Australia (WA) **do not** have daylight saving time. The change to “summer time” is not on the same dates as in Europe!

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mains voltage in Australia is 230V 50Hz.

Travellers from most nations in Asia, Africa and Europe should have appliances that work on the same mains voltage as Australia - therefore you will not need a voltage converter. Notable exceptions to this are Japan, USA and Canada which uses 100/120V 50/60Hz. Please note, however, that you will require a power adaptor. The plugs in Australia have 2 flat metal pins shaped like a "V" and some may contain a third flat pin in the centre.

METHODS OF PAYMENT

Australia's currency is the Australian dollar (AUD or A\$) where 1 dollar equals 100 cents. Australian dollar notes are available in \$ 5, \$ 10, \$ 20, \$ 50 and \$ 100 denominations. Coins are available in 5c, 10c, 50c (all silver coloured), 1 dollar and 2 dollar coins (all gold coloured) denominations.

You can exchange foreign currencies at all major banks, as well as at foreign exchange offices (service fees are charged). All major credit cards are accepted everywhere in urban areas. When travelling to remote areas it is advisable to carry some cash with you. Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) are available everywhere to withdraw cash in Australian dollars.

If you are importing or exporting over \$ 10,000 Australian dollars you must declare this to customs. For further information and large business finance transaction please consult the Australian Government Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre [here](#).

The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) is Australia's central bank and manages Australia's foreign exchange reserves. Currency fluctuations are best followed via the stock market, but the official and historical exchange rate information with the Swiss Franc can be found [here](#).

TRANSPORTATION

Important: In Australia road traffic is **on the left-hand side of the road**, with the steering wheel on the right-hand side of the car, so the opposite of Europe or the USA. **Please be careful** not only when travelling by hire car or bike, but also crossing the roads!

All of Australia's capital cities are served by a wide variety of [public transport](#), including trains, buses, ferries, light rail and trams. Taxis charge according to their meter reading, with a surcharge charged for trips departing from the airports. For travel between the major business hubs Sydney and Melbourne, domestic air travel is recommended.

BY AIR

Flying is the best way to cover Australia's large distances in a short time. Australia's domestic airlines – Qantas, Jetstar, Virgin Australia, Rex and their subsidiaries - serve all state capital cities and regional cities. Competition is great amongst domestic airlines, but shop around as fares can vary considerably. Bookings can be made online or through travel agencies of which there are many.

BY SEA

Ferries connect suburbs in the capital cities – they criss-cross Sydney Harbour, the Swan River in Perth and the Brisbane River in Brisbane.

The vessel *Spirit of Tasmania* runs a passenger and vehicle ferry service between Melbourne and Tasmania. Sealink ferries connect South Australia and Kangaroo Island several times a day.

Unless you are planning to take a private yacht or cruise ship to Australia as part of your business trip, most people do not arrive internationally by sea for business purposes. Having said that, however, should you or the crew require information about Australia's entry requirements, the shipping industry, passengers or legal requirements about arrival or departure by sea please consult the Department of Immigration and Border Protection [here](#) regarding maritime crew visas etc.

BY ROAD

If you are planning on hiring a car in Australia, please ensure you have a valid driver's licence and an English translation, as well as insurance. For Swiss citizens information can be found on the following [website](#). For the old blue Swiss driver's license, people registered in Switzerland can get an International driver's license from the relevant [authorities](#) in Switzerland prior to departure.

You'll find car rental companies at major airports, central city locations, suburbs and resorts. Consult the internet for their terms and conditions. Please also ensure you are adequately covered for the excess on the car hire policy. Unless you are insured through your travel insurance, please consider taking out excess damage waiver protection when you hire a car in Australia.

You will need a valid credit card with sufficient funds to hire a car in Australia, as the hire car companies block a security / guarantee amount on your card before you can hire a vehicle. This amount is unblocked once the vehicle has been returned in the same condition in which it was received. For further information please consult the hire car companies and their terms and conditions.

For your own safety, drink-driving laws apply, and drivers and passengers must wear seat belts at all times. Heavy fines apply for the aforementioned and also for the use of mobile phones while driving. Motor cyclists and cyclists must wear helmets. An international visitor may drive in Australia on a valid overseas driver's licence for the same class of vehicle only. Random Breath Tests (RBTs) are often performed by police on all roads in Australia, more visibly during holiday periods.

The maximum speed limit in cities and towns varies between 40km/h and 60km/h depending on the area and it is generally signposted. On country roads and highways, the maximum speed is usually 110km/h. Each state and territory has their own road rules. For more information please go to this [website](#) and click on the state or territory you wish to know more about.

The Australian Government has partnered with several private companies to finance, build, operate and maintain a number of motorways in Australia. Motorists are required by law to pay a 'toll' to drive on a private motorway.

All toll roads in Australia are "cashless". This means you'll need an electronic tag or pass to pay your tolls. Most hire car companies provide this in their vehicles, but they often charge an administration fee for each calendar day on which you use a toll. Please note that the administration fee from the hire car company is on top of the fee that the particular road you used charges! If you plan to stay in Australia for an extended period of time you can go to the offices of the relevant state or territory's road authority (see previous website above) and set up a pass. You can also pay a toll via the phone up to three days after you use a toll road, but it is a cumbersome process and not recommended.

BY RAIL

Train travel is a convenient and scenic way to explore Australia, but if it is for an interstate trip or to regional centres you will need to allow enough time due to the large distances. It is a big country!

Countrylink trains connect New South Wales destinations and also travel along Australia's east coast to Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra. VLine trains link Melbourne with regional hubs in Victoria, Traveltrain covers Queensland and TransWA criss-crosses Western Australia.

Australia also has epic rail journeys such as The Ghan and Indian-Pacific, though not generally used by business travellers. The Indian-Pacific travels between Sydney to Perth, stopping for whistle-stop tours of Broken Hill, Adelaide and gold-rich Kalgoorlie. The legendary Ghan travels between Adelaide and Darwin, taking in Australia's Red Centre and the tropical Top End.

HOTELS

Australia has accommodation for every budget. Ranging from 5-star hotels, luxury resorts to boutique or small hotels and backpackers. There are also a number of serviced apartments, should your business trip be for a longer time-period and you would like to feel more at home. These apartments generally contain a fully equipped kitchen or kitchenette and laundry facilities.

COMMUNICATION

Communication via phone, internet or using mail services is easy and well-organised in Australia. There is free-to-air commercial television and government-funded programmes, SBS and ABC, both on radio and television.

[Australia Post](#) is the Australian Government postal service for domestic and international mail services. There are branches of Australia Post all over the country, in every suburb. Apart from mail services you can also access Money Transfer Services at Australia Post if required. Most major international courier services are also available in Australia for business documents to be sent interstate or internationally.

Phone communication: The international country code for Australia for calls coming in is 61.

Landline phone numbers within Australia usually have 10 digits – two digits for the area code and eight digits for the number.

The area codes for the main Australian cities are:

- Sydney and Canberra - 02
- Melbourne and Hobart - 03
- Brisbane - 07
- Adelaide, Darwin and Perth – 08

Mobile phone numbers in Australia have 10 digits. Do not dial an area code within Australia if you are calling a mobile phone number, just dial the 10 digit number.

To dial an international number from Australia:

- If you are calling from a landline dial 0011 first, then the number, but leave out the zero in front of the area code before the number. Here is an example: If you were calling a phone number in Switzerland with county code 41 and in Bern, which is area code 031, you would dial: 0011 41 31
- From a mobile phone just dial +41 31

CELL PHONES

Australia uses the 900MHz and 1800MHz GSM bands for mobile phones. Before you arrive in Australia check that your phone will work on these bands and that your phone is “unlocked” (by your mobile phone provider). If your phone is marketed as "GSM", "tri-band" or "quad-band" it's a good bet your phone will work, but check before you leave to avoid any problems once in Australia.

If your phone works on these bands, you have three options for making/receiving calls in Australia:

- Using your existing SIM card
- Buying a international prepaid SIM card from your service provider before you leave
- Buying a new SIM card once you get to Australia

Local SIM cards can be purchased easily on arrival at any of the main airports in Australia or from service operators like Telstra, Vodafone, Optus and Virgin Mobile in the city with a pre-paid amount starting from as little as \$20.

You do not need to enter into a plan for a long period of time. These sim cards can be used for business travellers for short stays. There is no binding contract.

If you will be receiving calls from overseas this is probably the best option, as on most plans you do not need to pay to receive calls. Most hotels and many public places in Australia have free or low-cost Wi-Fi which is easy to connect to.

If you are using your existing SIM card, the only thing you need to check is if your service operator has enabled "roaming." This will allow you to use the networks in Australia with your SIM card. There are sometimes very high call charges for this though, so be careful. Check with your service operator before you leave.

BUSINESS HOURS

Business hours can vary, but generally the hours between 9am and 5pm (the traditional "9 to 5") from Monday to Friday are considered to be the standard business hours in Australia.

Sometimes this varies by region due to the need to conduct business by phone with people in different time zones (for example between Sydney and Perth). Typically Australians work a 38-hour week, often longer.

ADDRESSES AND OPENING HOURS OF THE EMBASSY OF THE COUNTRY IN SWITZERLAND

The Australian Permanent Mission / Consulate General in Geneva, Switzerland, **does not** process visa or citizenship applications. For clients resident in Switzerland visa processing is done electronically through the online [eVisitor visa](#) service, or by the immigration office at the Australian Embassy in Berlin, Germany. The Australian Consulate General is available for Australian Passport holders and for Consular Services. Appointments can be made between 9.00 am to 12.00 pm.

Australian Consulate General in Switzerland

Chemin des Fins 2
Case Postale 102
1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland
Ph. +41 (0) 22 799 9100

For further information, business hours and holiday closures click [here](#).

Australian Embassy in Germany

Wallstrasse 76-79
10179 Berlin, Germany
Phone: +49 (0) 30 88 00 88 0

Visa Enquiries Phone: +49 (0) 69 222 23 99 58, Mon-Fri 10am to 1pm, 2pm to 5pm
Fax: +49 (0) 30 22 48 92 92

Counter Hours Visa Section: Mon, Wed, Fri 9am to 11am

For further information, business hours and holiday closures click [here](#).

ADDRESSES OF THE SWISS EMBASSY AND CONSULATES

Embassy of Switzerland

7 Melbourne Avenue
Forrest (Canberra) ACT 2603, Australia

Phone: +61 (0) 2 6162 8400

Fax: +61 (0) 2 6273 3428

For further information, business hours and holiday closures click [here](#).

Consulate General of Switzerland in Sydney

101 Grafton Street, Cnr Grosvenor Street
Tower 2, Level 23
Bondi Junction NSW 2022, Australia

Postal Address:

PO Box 282

Bondi Junction NSW 1355, Australia

Phone: +61 (0) 2 8383 4000

Fax: +61 (0) 2 9369 1334

For further information, business hours and holiday closures click [here](#).

The Honorary Consulates in the other States and Territories of Australia support Swiss representations in safeguarding Switzerland's interests, foster trade partnerships and act in emergencies involving Swiss citizens abroad. Contact should be facilitated through the Consulate General of Switzerland in Sydney. For a detailed list of the Honorary Consulates click [here](#).

TIPS FOR INITIATING BUSINESS CONTACTS

Here a few suggestions on how to obtain business contacts, how to initiate contacts before you go and how to make your first appointments:

- **Switzerland Global Enterprise S-GE** exists to foster exports, to help clients develop new potential for their international businesses and can help with contacts overseas. There are many networking opportunities during the year e.g. the annual foreign trade forum.

- S-GE works closely with the **Trade and Cultural Affairs department at the Consulate General of Switzerland in Sydney**, to help small to medium businesses with trade and import advice and business contacts in Australia. You can email the Consulate at: syd.vertretung@eda.admin.ch
- The Science, Technology and Higher Education Office of the **Embassy of Switzerland in Canberra** can help with advice and contacts regarding Universities and Research Institutes. You can email the Embassy at: can.vertretung@eda.admin.ch
- **SwissCham Australia** is the Swiss-Australian Chamber of Commerce located in Sydney. The contact details for SwissCham can be found [here](#).
- **Australian Swiss Chamber of Commerce ASCC** is an independent, not-for-profit bilateral Chamber of Commerce, recognised by the Australian & Swiss business communities located in Switzerland. For more information please click [here](#).
- If you already have some contacts, note that appointments are relatively easy to schedule on practically all organisational levels. You'll find that many executives will be pleasant, approachable, and willing to meet to discuss business. The best policy is to arrange an appointment one month in advance. Don't expect to see anyone without an appointment. In Australia it does not matter how important or not someone is; you always have to make an appointment with someone if you want to meet them.

BUSINESS PRACTICES

Here a few tips on how to best communicate with and approach your business relationships in Australia:

- For the business traveller, the best time to visit is from March through November, since the hottest part of summer in Australia is from December through to February and that is also when a large portion of Australians take their annual vacation. Avoid scheduling visits around Christmas and Easter, since many executives will be away during these periods.
- Australians are known for their laid-back culture and lifestyle, but are usually very punctual with business appointments. Being casually late is not customary for business meetings.
- When meeting your Australian associates for the first time, it is customary to shake hands, firmly but briefly, at the beginning and end of a meeting. This is the preferred gesture for both male and female colleagues.

- Unlike in some cultures, it is not customary for men to comment on a woman's attire or looks.
- Australian people tend to dress rather conservatively in business environments. In some companies it is accepted to dress more casually, but if you are not sure about the way to dress when you go somewhere new, it is better to be over-dressed than under-dressed.
- Business travellers will soon realise not to be too self-promoting when presenting to Australians. A hard-sell approach can often be misconstrued as bragging and can provoke a negative response. A factual description of issues will be far better received than a more hyperbolic approach.
- Australia is one of the very few cultures in the world in which humour is all pervasive in business situations. Never underestimate an Australian senior manager because he or she uses humour.
- In meetings and negotiations Australians can come across as pretty relaxed. But beware, they are tough and direct business people. Sometimes this directness comes before diplomacy and therefore can be considered quite blunt on occasions, especially by people from those cultures in which the majority are wary of speaking plainly for fear of creating a negative emotional impact.
- If someone introduces themselves with their first name, you can assume that you can call them that. If you don't know how to address someone, sir or madam is always fine. However, eventually first names are invariably used in all business situations in Australia. While it is probably prudent to wait for your counterpart to initiate this, it would be very unusual to call a business contact by their surname. Similarly, educational titles play relatively little part in business situations except in the medical or academic worlds.
- Australians love sports, all sports, but especially the ones played or watched most frequently. The sports that are popular in Australia can be very different to elsewhere around the world and please take note: **Football (colloquial "footie") in Australia is not the same thing as soccer!** In addition to having different popular sports to those around the world, there are regional differences in the popularity of sports. For example the most popular football code in Sydney is Rugby League (NRL), while in Melbourne it is Australian Football or commonly called Australian Rules Football or Aussie Rules (AFL). Do not confuse them as people can be very sensitive and passionate about it! Cricket, Swimming, Rugby Union (ARU), Golf, Sailing, Soccer and Horse Racing are also very popular sports. Business meetings are sometimes held around, during or before or after an important sporting event. In business, Australians tend to be receptive to sporting analogies. For more information about Australian Sports click [here](#).

- Following initial introductions, negotiations will proceed quickly. Australians will negotiate major issues in an open and direct manner and obviously in accordance with their company policy. In meetings and negotiations, speak plainly and expect that what you say will be taken literally. Don't "beat around the bush"; be straight forward.
- Despite an overall results-orientated outlook towards business, the decision-making process can be sometimes be a slow and extended one, which should not be rushed or hurried. Australian business culture prefers a more collaborative approach to work and therefore managers and subordinates alike will give their input and consider the options before reaching a final decision.

Australian Business Etiquette (Do's and Don'ts)

- DO dress in business attire (suit/tie or dress) and be on time.
- DO engage in some initial "small talk" before a business meeting begins. Australians use this as a way of establishing rapport with their colleagues and is an important part of business etiquette.
- DO keep a certain amount of distance when in conversation with your Australian counterparts. Personal space is greatly valued in Australian culture.
- DO maintain good, direct eye contact with your Australian colleagues during all business meetings and conversations as this helps to establish trust.
- DON'T over-exaggerate or boast about your company's abilities or build up business information. Self-importance is not a favoured quality in Australian culture; therefore you should remain modest and unassuming at all times.
- DON'T discuss aspects of your personal life during business negotiations. Privacy is an important element of everyday life in Australia.
- DON'T use aggressive sales techniques whilst negotiating. Your Australian business colleagues will dislike being pressured and may be put off by this approach.
- DON'T bring gifts on your first visit to an Australian company. The laws on ethics, anti-corruption etc. are quite strict in Australia. Once the business partnership is established this can be discussed with your business partners.

SPECIAL FEATURES ON THE MARKET

With one of the most transparent and well-regulated business environments in the world, Australia's political stability and regulatory framework provides investors with confidence and security. Doing business in Australia is easier than in many other countries. For six years in a row, Australia has been ranked third on the Index of Economic Freedom. It is ranked 10th for ease of doing business to economies with a large population.³

Laws, regulations, policies and government directives on most matters; be they of political or legal nature or in regards to trade agreements/relations are generally to be found uploaded on the internet. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, called [DFAT](#), is a department of the Government of Australia which manages the government's foreign relations and trade policies.

The Australian Trade Commission, or [AUSTRADE](#), is the Australian Government's trade, investment and education promotion agency. It is a statutory agency within the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio, with offices in overseas embassies and consulates, and representative arrangements in some other locations.

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Author: Consulate General of Switzerland, Sydney - BUZMA

Author's address: PO Box 282, Bondi Junction NSW 1355, Australia

³ Source: <http://www.austrade.gov.au/Invest/Why-Australia/Business>
Switzerland Global Enterprise – Business Guide