

Flight of fancy
Balloons rise high
over the National
Museum of Australia



CANBERRA ON THE RISE

Australia's capital is finally getting the attention it deserves, as visitors discover a cultured, green city with plenty to offer...



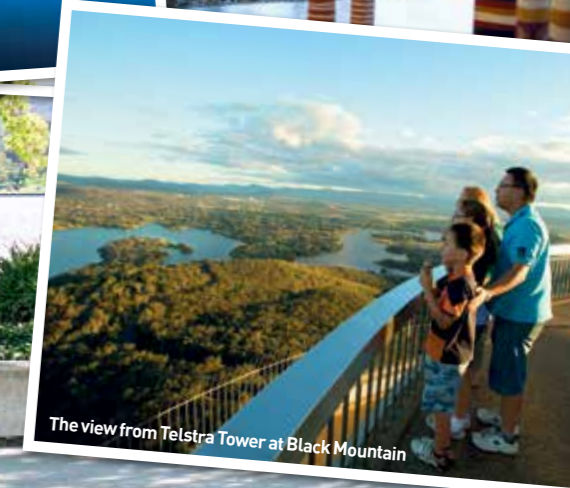
Lake Burley Griffin cycling loop.



Australian Parliament House



The Aboriginal Memorial at the National Gallery of Australia



The view from Telstra Tower at Black Mountain

Whether gazing down on its avenues from a hot air balloon or looking up at its monuments from a kayak on Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra is a strikingly handsome city. Designed from scratch in the early 1900s, the Australian capital is elegant, inclusive and accessible, and new direct flights have finally opened it up to the world.

If you've been to Australia before – or even if you haven't – you're likely familiar with the typical itinerary. Most start on the cultured streets of Sydney, then head north to Queensland's Gold Coast, or up to Cairns for trips out to the Great Barrier Reef, before making for the indigenous sights of the Red Centre. Far fewer head south, taking the short route to Australia's modern capital, despite it being just a few hours' drive from Sydney. All of which is a crying shame, as the city's lush setting and cultured array of museums, parks and public art make it something of an underrated gem.

Canberra's spacious lakeside districts have a wealth of attractions that offer an easy way to digest its history. Its museums afford a chance to delve into the fascinating background of the country, from its indigenous culture to colonialism and wars, all presented with imagination, sensitivity and flair. What's more, these are scattered over an area that's both compact and attractive, with gracious avenues and

thoughtfully designed gardens, making exploring them a pleasure. Stay for at least three days, and you'll be amazed at how much you can pack in.

City of history & art

Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin, the architects behind Canberra's design, wanted the city to be a beautiful, diverse centre belonging to all Australians. Key to their vision was a host of temples to Australian art, history, literature, science and culture, spaced out around a vast, man-made lake. When the lake was finally completed, 52 years later, it was named after Walter.

This spirit of inclusion extends to the city's institutions, too. Canberra's world-class collections and exhibitions are housed in striking 20th century buildings – some inspired by classical styles, others uncompromisingly brutalist – and almost all are free to visit. Don't miss the National Museum of Australia, a collection of inspiring exhibits that tells the story of the nation's history. The Australian War Memorial is also both a shrine and one of the world's most poignant war museums, where dioramas and a vast Roll of Honour put the tragedies of human conflict into context.

Elsewhere, fine art lovers can gorge on the greats at the National Gallery of Australia,

which brings together paintings, sculptures and installations by international and local artists, and houses Australia's largest collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. There's more local talent to enjoy in the National Portrait Gallery, where you'll spot Dame Edna Everage, Kylie Minogue and the Queen among a sea of other notable faces.

From street to eats

Creativity abounds in a city that's liberally sprinkled with public art displays – from an aluminium sheep in a barber's chair and a flight of orange bogong moths to a tangle of iron girders representing native grasses – there's inspiration on every corner. Of the 100 or so commissioned outdoor pieces,

over half are in Civic, Canberra's commercial centre. Here you'll find famous sculptures such as *Ainslie's Sheep* by Les Kossatz and Matthew Harding's *The Cushion and the Wedge* on City Walk and Garema Place respectively.

To delve into the city's contemporary art scene, head for Canberra Contemporary Art Space (CCAS) at Gorman Arts Centre in Braddon, a creative hub that hosts talks, exhibitions and performances. Or try Canberra Glassworks in Kingston – the only centre of its kind in Australia – where you can get ▶

DID YOU KNOW?

The Australian National Botanic Gardens contain over 6,200 plant species including a propagated Wollemi pine, one of the world's oldest and rarest species of tree.



To tap into the city's experimental side, visit NewActon, an eco-friendly live-work quarter where hip galleries, eateries and apartments lie among communal vegetable gardens dotted with sculptures. While you're there, you could grab a plate of something fresh and healthy at Mocan and Green Grout, an ethical café that employs local artisans and grows many of its own ingredients.

Australia's Bush Capital

Canberra is the only major Australian city that's totally surrounded by mountains, forests, grasslands, rivers and lakes. More than 50 per cent of the region that the city governs (Australian Capital Territory) is made up of protected land, including nature reserves, national parks and state forests, making it the perfect springboard for a hiking, cycling or horseriding trip.

At weekends, locals in the know head for Namadgi National Park and Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, south-west of the city. The latter has recently re-introduced koalas; sheltered in a dedicated sanctuary, they have the luxury of constant care.

In both areas, waymarked hiking trails wind through their protected landscapes, and with patience you have a good chance of seeing birds, bats, marsupials and frogs. Namadgi also has basic campsites where you can stay for up to three nights at a time, for total immersion in the wild.

While both are within easy reach of central Canberra, you don't need to leave the city at all for an adventure. One of the most popular trails in town is the 5km Bridge to Bridge trail, an easy stroll that crosses Lake Burley Griffin and boasts fine views.

Enjoyable cycling paths loop all the way around the city lake, while footpaths wind through the fragrant, leafy oasis of the Australian National Botanic Gardens. The hike up Mount Ainslie, though bracing, is worth it – not only for the wonderful city panorama you'll see from the lookout at the top, but also as a prime kangaroo-spotting location if you go at dawn or dusk.

If you'd like to cruise over the city's parks and monuments in a hot air balloon, you'll have to keep an eye on the weather forecast, since conditions have to be right. But if you get the chance, grab it: it's another Canberra classic – just one more unforgettable reason to make sure that you travel a little further south on your next Australian adventure.



hands-on experience of glass-blowing and casting, or simply watch a master at work.

Canberra's chefs, bakers and baristas have a creative streak, too. Some of Australia's finest contemporary restaurants can be found here, offering dishes that fuse Australian, European and Asian techniques and flavours. The best – Aubergine, Courgette Temporada, Lanterne Rooms, etc – are always scooping awards. Elsewhere, good coffee is taken just as seriously as in other Australian cities, and at gourmet coffee shops such as The Cupping Room in Civic, you'll always be served by an expert.

The quest for perfection continues at Canberra's friendly boutique vineyards, north of town. Book a tour of its cellar doors and you may well find yourself chatting with the vintners in person as you taste their wines.

Green & pleasant city

Canberra is a city that's green, both in terms of its lush, sweeping park and its eco credentials. Designed by architects who

took their inspiration from the 'garden city movement', which aimed to create a more natural feel to a city, the layout includes generous, unfenced open spaces planted with native Australian eucalyptus and conifers, their leaves a soothing grey-green. Come September and October, the city parks explode with colour as everyone comes together for Floriade, a month-long festival to celebrate spring.

DID YOU KNOW?
A light rail network is now under construction in Canberra and is set to open in 2019. It is in keeping with architect Walter Burley Griffin's masterplan that first proposed a tram system.

Meanwhile, this city of early-adopters has long since embraced green technology and environmentally friendly practices. Thanks to its solar-powered public buildings, extensive cycling paths and impeccable air quality,

a World Health Organisation report on air pollution ranked Canberra as the world's third-cleanest capital after Stockholm and Wellington. Factor in its lively cultural and culinary scene, and it's no wonder that Canberra regularly tops the Numbeo Quality of Life Index for cities worldwide – an active vibe that runs throughout a capital which just loves to get outdoors.

Singapore Airlines (SIA) recently celebrated two major milestones in its history of flying to Australia. In 2016, it became the first airline to operate regularly scheduled international flights direct to Canberra. Then, a few months later, it went on to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its first flight Down Under.

In the early days of its passenger service to Australia, back in 1967, SIA flew from Singapore to Sydney via Perth. Since then, the airline has added other Australian cities to its network, with the newest service, the Capital Express to Canberra, creating quite a buzz when it launched last year. It operates four times a week.

Canberra's AirVolution

Perhaps surprisingly, nearly all the scheduled flights into the Australian capital used to be domestic, with international visitors having to fly into Canberra via Sydney or Melbourne, or opting to arrive by road.

Operated previously by the RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force), who maintained a presence right up until 2003, Canberra Airport has grown in stages, culminating in a A\$500 million 'AirVolution' redevelopment programme between 2009 and 2014. The city now has one of Australia's most environmentally friendly airport

FLY THE CAPITAL EXPRESS TO CANBERRA

With Singapore Airlines' new international flights finally opening Canberra up to the world, it's never been easier to visit the capital

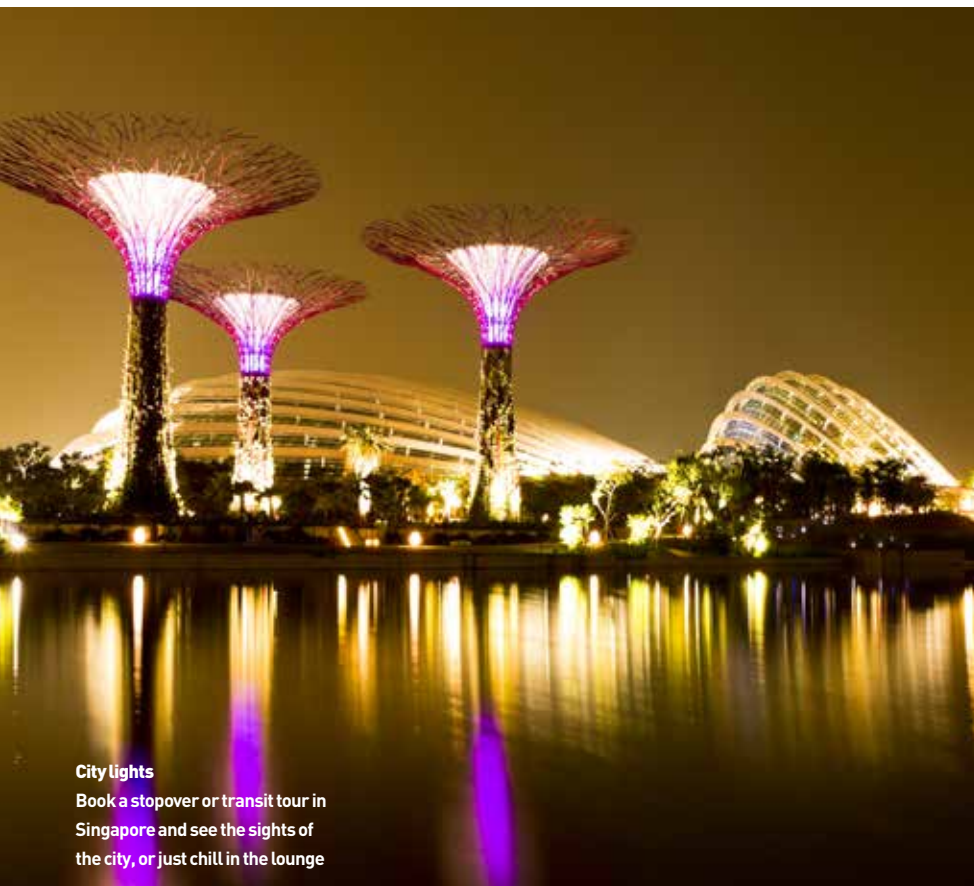
You can now fly Singapore Airlines' Premium Economy service from London and Manchester to Changi, Singapore

terminals, equipped with high-tech energy production, water management and recycling systems that have helped to reduce its carbon emissions by 75%.

A campaign to open Canberra Airport to international flights ran for years. At the time, there were no immigration and customs officers permanently stationed in the capital; whenever the state Rugby Union team chartered a plane to take them to an international fixture, staff had to be brought in especially to handle the paperwork.

The Singapore Airlines Capital Express changed all that, as Canberra prepared for





City lights
Book a stopover or transit tour in Singapore and see the sights of the city, or just chill in the lounge



◀ the arrival of the first Boeing 777-200 aircraft from Singapore by adding new international border facilities, complete with currency exchange points and duty-free shops.

Speed, comfort and style

It takes just seven hours and 35 minutes to fly with SIA from Singapore's Changi Airport to Canberra, making the flight from Heathrow or Manchester via Singapore to Canberra one of the fastest routes from the UK to Australia. Departure and arrival times are convenient. It's also possible to start your journey from a regional airport in the UK by connecting with an SIA flight to Singapore at a primary European airport such as Paris CDG, Frankfurt or Amsterdam.

Those who value comfort as much as speed will be pleased to hear that SIA are one of just nine airlines in the world to hold a five-star rating from Skytrax, an airline and airport ranking organisation. SIA offer a full dining and bar service to economy passengers, with menus designed by an international culinary panel, including the Australian celebrity chef Matt Moran, and wine selected by Michael Hill Smith, Australia's first Master of Wine.

For more comfort (without the business class price tag), book a seat in the widely praised premium economy class between

Heathrow or Manchester and Singapore. This gets you extra leg room, storage space, power points and menu choices.

Change at Changi

Singapore's convenient location, around 13 hours' flying time from London, maximises the opportunity for uninterrupted sleep during the journey to Australia from the UK. What's more, Changi, a multi-award-winning airport in an attractive, modern and dynamic city, offers such a stress-free transfer experience that long-haul travellers regularly vote it their favourite place to change planes.

To make transit time even more enjoyable, SIA, Singapore Tourism Board and Changi offer a free tour to passengers with 5.5 hours or more to spare. The tours take in highlights such as Chinatown, Little India and Gardens by the Bay, with its Supertree Grove. Places can be booked in advance through SIA, or you can simply show up at the Free Singapore Tour Registration Booth in Terminal 2 or 3 at least an hour before the tour starts.

Singapore Air passengers transiting through Changi (and have onward connections with SIA or Silk Air) will also be gifted a Changi Dollar Voucher worth S\$20 (£11). They can spend this in airport shops and food outlets or on lounge access on a leg of your journey.

To claim a voucher, present your passport, boarding passes and e-ticket at the iShopChangi Collection Centre in T2 or T3.

Stopover in Singapore

Planning a city break in Singapore en route to Canberra is easy with a Singapore Airlines Singapore Stopover Holiday package, which includes airport transfers and hotels, plus the option of a tour aboard the SIA Hop-on Bus and admission to over 15 tourist attractions.

When visiting Singapore, make sure you hang on to your SIA boarding pass. For a month after your arrival, this is your key to a host of discounts on local shopping, dining, entertainment, hotels, tourist attractions and transport. SIA KrisFlyer and PPS Club members benefit from the same privileges year-round by using their membership card.

Experiencing two of the world's most exciting cities while making use of the benefits that Singapore Airlines gift you? It's the ideal way to help celebrate Singapore Airlines reaching its latest travel milestone.



For more information on Singapore Airlines, go to www.singaporeair.com