



Local Information

Location

Perth's geographical setting on Western Australia's southern coast makes it an ideal conference venue. It is closer to Southeast Asian ports than to eastern Australian capitals, both of which offer connections across the Pacific into North America, and it enjoys easy connections to Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Perth is a picturesque city, built along the Swan River and Indian Ocean, both of which provide beautiful scenery and treasured playgrounds for the city's 1.2 million residents. Perth's lifestyle is very informal and relaxed, with a strong emphasis on outdoor relaxing, entertaining and sports.

The city was settled by Europeans in 1829, but has an indigenous culture stretching back over 40,000 years. Predominantly Anglo-Celtic in its first century, the city has enjoyed major migrations from Europe after the Second World War and, in more recent decades, from Asia. This has contributed greatly to the cultural diversity of the community, seen first in the faces on the street and soon enjoyed in restaurants of every style and nationality. Eating-out is a Perth past-time, which the Mediterranean climate allows for much of the year.

Beyond Perth, WA offers the visitor great variety, from the spectacular out-back of the Kimberley and Pilbara regions in the north, to the rolling hills of the world-class Margaret River wine region in the southwest, only a few hours drive from Perth.

Daily flights also connect Perth with all eastern States capitals, offering delegates easy access to world famous Aussie sights and experiences, from the vast red centre to the Great Barrier Reef and Sydney's magnificent harbour and Opera House.

Climate

The Western Australian climate ranges from tropical in the far north to temperate in the south. Perth enjoys a Mediterranean climate, with warm to hot dry summers, with a cooling sea breeze from December to April. The winters are mild and bring most of the city's rainfall from June to August.

Perth in November has an average temperature range of 14°C to 25°C with a possibility of showers. The afternoon sea breeze can be strong and evenings cool, so a warm jacket is recommended. If you are traveling to other destinations within WA or Australia, you can check the weather by visiting www.bom.gov.au.

Dress

Reflecting the lifestyle and climate, dress is usually relaxed and casual. Jackets and ties are not normally worn to work in many companies in summer, and are not required in restaurants and bars. Business suits are common among professionals, especially in winter, and for dining out and special social functions. Lightweight clothing is recommended in summer, with a hat and sunglasses for protection.

Language

English is spoken by all. Multi-lingual interpreters are available at international entry points and major hotels.

Currency and Credit Cards

Australia has a decimal system of dollars and cents. Exchange facilities are available at Perth International Airport or city banks. International class hotels will also exchange major currencies for guests.

Customs

Visitors over 18 years may bring duty free into Australia up to 250g of

tobacco products and 2.25 litres of alcoholic beverages, and articles being left in Australia to the value of AU \$900.

Electricity

Mains supply is 240V-AC with a 10% tolerance. Frequency is 50Hz. The Australian three-pin power outlet is different from most countries, including Asia, so visitors will need an adaptor socket. Higher standard hotels and motels provide universal 110V outlets for electric shavers.

Tipping

There is no tradition of tipping in Australia and it is not expected in many restaurants or taxis. However, tipping (to 10%) is now common in most international-style hotels and many restaurants. Tips are not part of staff salaries in Australia and do reward good service. If the service has been good, a tip is certainly appreciated.

Restaurants

Perth offers virtually every style of cuisine in an excellent range of restaurants. It is wise to make a reservation. Minimum legal drinking age is 18, although children are allowed in licensed areas in the company of an adult. Many limited-license establishments allow you to take your own wine and are known as BYO (Bring Your Own) restaurants. Fully licenced restaurants will allow BYO but charge a corkage. Smoking is prohibited inside restaurants but is allowed in alfresco dining areas, subject to the establishment's policy.

Public Transport

Public transport is cheap and reliable. A modern bus system links all suburbs and surrounding towns to the city, while a free Central Area Transit

(CAT) service operates within the main city area. In addition, travel is free on all Transperth buses within the Perth Free Transit Zone. A charming and efficient ferry service links Perth to South Perth, site of the local zoo.

A modern, suburban electric rail service links Perth with Fremantle, Midland, Aramdale and Clarkson, and suburbs along the way. One of the world's great rail journeys is the trans-Australia service on the Indian Pacific, linking Perth with Sydney and the eastern seaboard. Modern passenger trains operate from Perth to the southwest coastal city of Bunbury and to the eastern gold mining centre of Kalgoolie-Boulder.

For country travel, sealed all-weather roads go from Perth to all major regional towns and cities. Regular scheduled air and coach services provide an ideal way to discover this vast State. Interstate travel is easy on daily scheduled air services to all Australian capitals.

Taxis

Taxi ranks are located outside both the domestic and international terminals, and commissionaires are available to assist you during peak periods. As a general guide, the following fees apply for taxis travelling from: Domestic Airport to the Central Business District: AU\$25; International Airport to the Central Business District: AU\$30. Tipping is not expected.

Perth Airport

Perth is the most readily accessible of any Australian capital to South East Asia, and is in the same time zone. It is the western gateway to Australia for European visitors, while North American visitors can take advantage of Pacific or New Zealand stopovers.

There are separate domestic and international terminals. The Central Business District is located 20 minutes from the domestic terminal and 30 minutes from the international terminal.

Time Zones

Perth and Western Australia are GMT +8 hours. In November, the eastern states are +2 hours relative to Perth.



Photo courtesy of Tourism Western Australia

GST

The 10% Goods and Services Tax (GST) is included in all costs in Australia. A GST refund can be obtained in certain circumstances at the point of departure from Australia. We recommend you pick up a brochure on the Tourist Refund Scheme on your arrival in Australia.

Visas

All foreign nationals visiting Australia require a visa or Electronic Travel Authority. Some visas and ETAs are available over the Internet. ETAs are also available from travel agents and airlines in certain countries.

Alternatively, visas are available from Australian visa offices such as Australian embassies, high commissions or consulates. Please ensure that you allow time for the processing of your visa application. Refer to page 5 for further information.

Temporary Health Insurance

AAPG's Committee on Group Insurance has arranged for insurance plans designed to cover the special situations international travelers might encounter that may not be covered by their domestic insurance.

HealthCare Abroad, for residents of the U.S. under age 85 traveling outside the U.S., provides medical, accidental death and dismemberment, and worldwide assistance coverage.

HealthCare Global, for foreign nationals traveling to destinations outside of the U.S., provides accident and sickness coverage plus worldwide assistance coverage. Complete details, including information on cost and applications for coverage, may be found at www.wallach.com, or you may call Wallach and Co. by phone at +1 800 237 6615 or +1 540 687 3166, or email info@wallach.com.

The AAPG Insurance Program's Broker's office may be reached at +1 800 254 4788 or +1 703 367 8970.