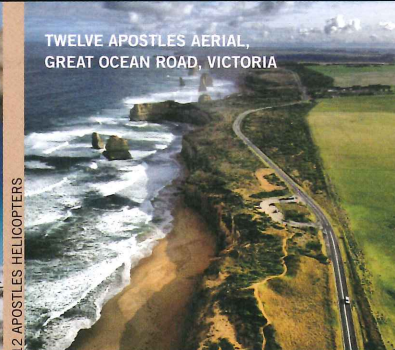


SEAN SCOTT PHOTOGRAPHY  
SCAM AUSTRALIA  
story

LUCKY BAY, CAPE LE GRAND NATIONAL PARK, WESTERN AUS.



TWELVE APOSTLES AERIAL,  
GREAT OCEAN ROAD, VICTORIA



HARTLEY'S CROCODILE  
ADVENTURES, QUEENSLAND



# Water Ways

## Australia's aquatic allures range from seaplane tours to snorkeling the Great Barrier Reef

By Jeff Heilman

**O**fficially unveiled this January in New York City, the latest installment of Tourism Australia's global "There's Nothing Like Australia" campaign focuses on Oz's many aquatic and coastal experiences.

Water is lifeblood in this unique island-nation-continent, which boasts 19,000 miles of coastline surrounded by oceans and seas ranging from tropical to sub-Antarctic. With 70 percent of international visitors seeking out an aquatic and coastal experience, as noted at the launch by Tourism Australia's Managing Director John O'Sullivan, it's also an irresistible calling card for groups.

"For corporate decision-makers who have visited, Australia delivers strongly," said Penny Lion, Tourism Australia's executive general manager of events. "Our natural environments are a key driver of this satisfaction, and this especially includes our world-class aquatic and coastal experiences, which provide yet another platform on which to showcase our destinations, superior accommodation options, world-famous food and wine, and outstanding event delivery capabilities."

With major facility expansions and

global recognition keeping business events flowing, Australia's ways with water are winning even more attention.

### Sydney

Boasting the world's largest natural harbor and 70-plus beaches, Sydney is an unrivalled aquatic playground. From seafood restaurants to surfing lessons, there are hundreds of waterfront event spaces and aquatic activities within a 19-mile radius of the city.

For spectacular city views from some 440 feet above Sydney Harbour, there are several different guided experiences up the ironwork of the mighty Sydney Harbour Bridge. Groups seeking higher inspiration can arrange seaplane tours over the harbor area and beyond, while those looking to hit the water below can book cruises or sailing challenges with popular provider East Sail. From ferry rides to jet boating, other options run as deep as the harbor itself.

With two harbor-facing outdoor decks, historic Crystal Palace is an inviting event spot at the famed Luna Park amusement

complex, while inside the iconic Sydney Opera House, Bennelong restaurant hosts private events in a setting as stunning as the cuisine. Inspiring, too, are Sydney's beaches, from intimate Tamarama (locally, Glamarama), site of the annual Sculpture by the Sea exhibition, to iconic Bondi, where groups can learn how to surf, dine facing the water and soak in the remarkable scene.

Set to open this December, the A\$1.1 billion (USD\$838 million) International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC Sydney) delivers a commanding new high-tech convention, exhibition and entertainment complex on the Darling Harbour waterfront.

Anchoring the overall A\$3 billion (USD\$2.3 billion) Darling transformation, the project, which has already attracted more than A\$220 million (USD\$168 million) in new business, includes an attached 600-room headquarters hotel. Now offering 892 rooms, nearby Four Points by Sheraton Sydney, Australia's largest hotel, has completed a major A\$200 million (USD\$152 million) makeover.

### Melbourne

Melbourne, Victoria's stylish capital on the shores of Port Phillip Bay, is a global leader for major international academic, medical and scientific conferences. This May, the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) confirmed plans first announced in 2014 for an A\$205 million (USD\$156 million), 66,000-square-foot addition. Featuring 30,000 square feet of new exhibition halls, new meeting and banquet rooms and a new 305-room hotel, the



DAVID CLARE FOR DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET  
SYDNEY HARBOUR

expansion, aiming for 2018, will grow total space to more than 230,000 square feet.

MCEC sits on the banks of Melbourne's other major body of water, the Yarra River, which takes center stage for tours, cruises, riverfront venues and events like the famous Moomba Festival, dragon boat races and Melbourne Food & Wine Festival.

Sister venues Encore, Republica and Captain Baxter are group choices on St. Kilda Beach, while Big Stick Adventures offers sailing excursions in Port Phillip Bay, including runs to the scenic Mornington Peninsula. Helicopter and ground tours of the spectacular Twelve Apostles limestone spires along iconic Great Ocean Road are Melbourne musts.

### Queensland

Brisbane, capital of Queensland, was recently crowned world convention venue champion. In June, the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre (BCEC) turned 21, celebrating 18,000 events, 14 million visitors and A\$3.87 billion (USD\$2.9 billion) in economic benefit. One month later, the venue, host for the 2014 G20 Summit, was named World's Best Convention Centre by the International Association of Congress Centres (AIPEC).

Next year sees the anticipated completion of the new waterfront Howard Smith Wharves development, including an exhibition and event venue and boutique hotel.

Brisbane River activities include boat tours, climbs of historic Story Bridge (1940), and waterfront dining at Eagle Pier. Local operator Riverside offers stand-up paddleboarding, nighttime kayaking tours and rock climbing on Brisbane's Kangaroo Point cliffs.

With its oceanfront skyscrapers, theme parks and legendary beaches like Surfer's Paradise, the Gold Coast, an hour south of Brisbane, is investing in new infrastructure

ahead of hosting the 2018 Commonwealth Games. With the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre providing 33,000 square feet of exhibition space, plus a 6,000-seat arena and generous outdoor space, the new beachfront Kurrawa Terrace can host up to 350 people for cocktail receptions.

Featuring miles of pristine sand along spectacular cliffs, the Sunshine Coast, an hour's drive north of Brisbane, lures groups with Steve Irwin's Australia Zoo; customized programs on World Heritage-listed Fraser Island, the world's largest sand island; and whale-watching tours on horseback and more in resort destination Noosa.

Gateway to Tropical North Queensland, where World Heritage-listed wonders the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics of Queensland rainforest are essential visits, coastal Cairns hosts groups of up to 5,000 at the award-winning Cairns Convention Centre.

From Cairns, the Captain Cook Highway heads north past unique venues like Hartley's Crocodile Adventures and the private Thala Beach Nature Reserve resort before reaching Port Douglas. Well supplied with hotel rooms, this former fishing village is an ideal launch point for day-long excursions to the spellbinding universe of the 1,800-mile long Great Barrier Reef.

### Western Australia

Founded in 1829 along the majestic Swan River, sunny Perth, capital of Western Australia, offers the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre and 15,000-seat Perth Arena. Facing the Indian Ocean, the city's 19 white-sand beaches include magnificent Cottesloe, where landmark Indiana restaurant, originally a 1910 ice-cream parlor, is an event standout.

Groups can enjoy Swan River yachting excursions, or take the short ferry ride to car-free Rottnest Island for cycling, sailing, kayaking and otherworldly views from Wadjemup Lighthouse. Southwest of Perth, groups can view marine life at the Underwater Observatory on Busselton Jetty.

### South Australia

Adelaide, South Australia's seaside capital, is finishing up the A\$397 million (USD\$302 million) expansion of the Adelaide Con-


vention Centre. Anticipating completion by mid-2017 with the addition of the golden-clad East Building, offering plenary seating for 3,000 delegates, the three-structure Centre overlooks the River Torrens in the scenic Riverbank Precinct.

With river-based activities

that include dinner under the stars and dragon boat races, Adelaide is also the jumping off point for magical Kangaroo Island. An hour west by air, Port Lincoln on the scenic Eyre Peninsula is known for shark cage diving, kiteboarding, cruises, oyster tastings and more.

Halfway between Sydney and Melbourne, inland Canberra, Australia's capital city, offers 5,000-plus hotel rooms and the centrally located National Convention Centre. Encircled by a 22-mile multiuse path, manmade Lake Burley Griffin is noted for cruising, yachting, kayaking and windsurfing.

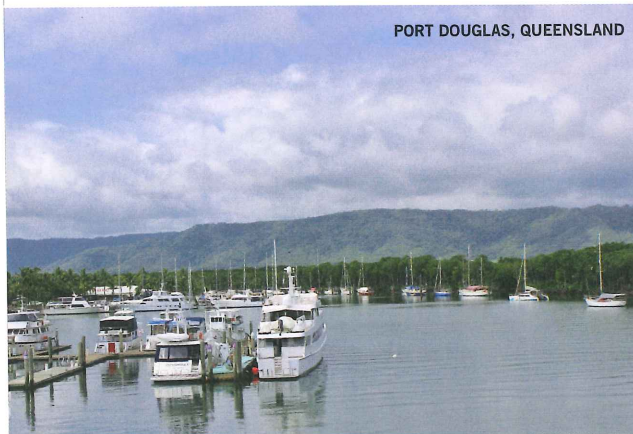
Stretching from Australia's tropical "Top End" to its arid "Red Centre," home to 600 million-year-old icon Uluru (Ayers Rock), the Northern Territory is three times larger than Texas. Facing the Timor Sea at the Top End, multicultural capital city Darwin features the waterfront Darwin Convention Centre and group-capable Crocosaurus Cove.

Two hours south by car, Litchfield National Park features the twin Florence Falls, swimming holes, Aboriginal-led tours and wildlife cruises along the Reynolds River. To the east, World Heritage-listed Kakadu is Australia's largest national park, while farther south, Nitmiluk National Park is great for canoeing or cruising through the towering Katherine Gorge, exploring Aboriginal rock art and more. 



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