

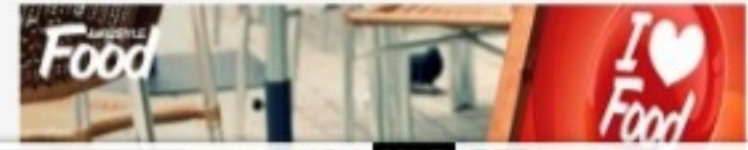


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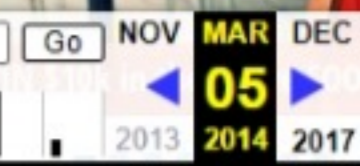
Take a Road Trip in Australia



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28 Nov 2013 - 15 Mar 2021



Take a Road Trip in Australia



Travel Writer Fiona Harper explains why jumping in the car and taking a road trip in Australia makes for a fantastic holiday - and shares her favourite Aussie drives.

Do you remember Jack Nicolson in the movie As Good as it Gets? Playing eccentric, obsessive-compulsive Melvin, he was rather nervous about an impromptu road trip with Carol whom he rather fancied and Simon whom he didn't. He had prepared a carefully labelled playlist tagged to 'get things going' or for use as 'icebreakers' as the three of them settled into leather seats and drove out of New York bound for good times and noodle salad. I can't watch that movie without wishing I too was heading off on an extended road trip.

Growing up in country West Australia, family holidays always included a road trip: we rarely flew anywhere. Three kids on the back seat, plus the dog (sometimes a hitchhiker too). Border collie crossbreed Poochie was always first in the car whenever it looked like Team Harper was hitting the road and was never left behind. Except for that one time, in Whyalla I think it was after crossing the Nullarbor Plain, when Dad somehow managed to drive off without her, creating buckets of hysterical tears from the back seat when we realised. We went back though and thankfully found her, welcoming her return into our back seat bunker with delirious delight.

Usually we'd have a caravan hitched behind us, which back then were all bubble-like curves with oversized windows. Actually the windows were so large I managed to roll right out of one, landing with a thud on the dirt one night while asleep on the top bunk. But that's a story Mum would rather I not tell (sorry Mum, I have). Later, our family moved to the Pilbara and road trips became more adventurous as we ventured off road, billowing clouds of fine ochre dust coating us, the camper trailer and everything packed inside it. Poochie was still with us, her white coat tinted as red as our feet, swimming alongside us in freshwater streams, clamouring up cliffs, chasing lizards or sleeping exhausted beside the campfire while Mum prepared dinner on the camp stove.

Fast forward 30 years and despite open skies and low cost airlines encouraging us to fly hither and thither, I still love the thrill of hitting the road. Whether that road is paved with asphalt, dirt, gravel or bulldust, it's the lure of the unknown that is so enticing. No matter whether the verge is bordered by architecturally miserable roadhouses or primeval rainforest, once in the car it's kind of like having your own private ticket to ride, destination unknown. Sure maps, apps and guidebooks have quashed some of the mystery but they've also made driving off into the unknown a whole lot more fun (and safe) too.

So where are my favourite Australian drives? The Great Ocean Road in Victoria remains a firm favourite, so too Queensland's Captain Cook Highway flanked by reef and rainforest between Cairns and Port Douglas. The Gold Coast Hinterland has the Scenic Rim, all craggy dormant volcanic peaks clad with rainforest, while further north and inland from the Sunshine Coast Steve Irwin Way winds through the Glasshouse Mountains. Out west the Cape to Cape route rambles through award winning vineyards, karri forest and small towns, hugging the coast in parts, rolling through farmland in others. In Tasmania, just about every outing is worthy of 'road trip' status the whole state is so damn pretty, but I am rather fond of the Huon Trail south of Hobart that meets up with the car-carrying barge to Bruny Island.

We're awfully fortunate in Australia to have such splendid road infrastructure. Hitting the road, whether for a few weeks or a few hours really is as good as it gets.

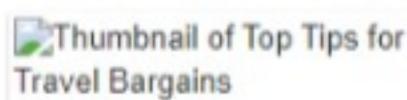
More info:

Australian Road Trips (app) by Lee Atkinson - <https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/australian-road-trips/id488257058?mt=8>

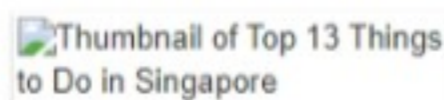
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