

 JANUARY 2025

AN EXPAT GUIDE TO LIVING IN SUNSHINE COAST



Donna Stroupe

Abstract

This guide provides essential insights for expats planning to move to the Sunshine Coast, Australia. It covers key aspects such as lifestyle, cost of living, housing options, healthcare, education, and job opportunities. Readers will find useful information on navigating local culture, transportation, and recreational activities, making their transition smoother. Whether you're looking for a relaxed coastal lifestyle or career opportunities, this guide helps you settle into the Sunshine Coast with confidence.



Getting Started

Moving to the Sunshine Coast offers a perfect blend of stunning beaches, a relaxed lifestyle, and thriving communities. Whether you're relocating for work, study, or a fresh start, this guide provides essential information to help expats navigate life in this beautiful region. From housing and healthcare to local culture and job opportunities, this resource ensures a smooth transition to your new coastal home.

I. What To Expect As An Expat In Australia

Many know Australia as the land down under where koalas and kangaroos roam free. Yet the millions of immigrants who call Australia home know it as so much more: a land with multicultural cities, a strong job market, and one of the best healthcare systems in the world. If you're thinking about living in Australia, learn about the country's visa programs, cost of living, and other key factors before you make the move.



Below is a guide to how you can prepare for expat life in Australia.

Is it Easy to Live as an Expat in Australia?

Australia is a great place to live for many foreign-born citizens, but certainly not for all.

Benefits of Immigrating to Australia

Australian culture is incredibly diverse. The people are friendly and the country is welcoming to immigrants, given that approximately 30% of all Australian residents were born overseas. However, the immigration laws are still strict, which can be challenging for foreigners who want to move there permanently.

Aussies are known for their laidback way of life and good work-life balance. The country is a dream for people who want to live an active, adventurous

lifestyle. Foreigners seeking work in Australia will be pleased to discover many great full-time and part-time job opportunities across the country, especially for skilled workers in high-demand fields such as healthcare, engineering, construction, and IT.

If you're moving with children, Australia also has a great education system with high-quality public, international, and private schools.

Challenges of Immigrating to Australia

The Australian continent is a long distance from most places in the northern hemisphere. That's why some expats find themselves feeling isolated from family and friends back home. Traveling to places outside the country can be time consuming and costly, making it no easy feat to visit loved ones in other parts of the world.

To give you a better idea of what traveling from Australia to other countries can look like, Australia is located at a distance of about:

- ✓ 9,461 miles/15,226 km from London, England
- ✓ 9,361 miles/15,065 km from Dallas, Texas
- ✓ 9,198 miles/14,803 km from Amsterdam, the Netherlands
- ✓ 9,248 miles/14,884 km from Winnipeg, Canada

The majority of immigrants in Australia come from countries in close proximity. These include India, China, Hong Kong, Pakistan, South Africa, and New Zealand.

For Europeans who are accustomed to fast and easy travel between nearby countries, domestic travel within Australia can feel like a burden. Unlike Europe, where many major cities can be reached by train within a few hours, the distance between Australia's major cities can take close to half a day of travel by land, if not longer.

Depending on where you're coming from, the quality of housing in Australia may be a cause for concern. Housing is not up to the same standards as in North America, for example. Poor ventilation and poor insulation mean that

homes in colder regions of the country can feel very cold during the winter season.

Australia is also known to have a high cost of living. Many foreigners, regardless of where they're from, are often surprised by how much it can cost to rent a home and afford everyday expenses in the country.

II. Why The Sunshine Coast?

Are you considering a move to the Sunshine Coast? Located approximately 100 kilometres north of Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast has a reputation for sun, surf, good times and friendly people – something author (Joe Bautista) knows from firsthand experience.



5 Things I Wish I Knew Before Moving To The Sunshine Coast

1. The Sunshine Coast is a great place to live

When you think of Australia, places like Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne are usually the first that come to mind. However, there's so much more to Australia than the big cities.

"The Sunshine Coast is a developing region, but it's already rich in culture and attractions," says Joe. "The landscape of the Sunshine Coast – from the coast, foothills and hinterlands – is also so good for people like myself who yearn for a multitude of activities to do while studying and exploring the country."

From sandy beaches, rainforests, national parks and historic villages to wineries, breweries, galleries, shopping centres, sporting facilities and dining experiences, you'll always have something to do!

Its subtropical climate also makes the Sunshine Coast an ideal year-round destination to live, study and play.

2. Public transport is great but get a car if you can

Public transport is an affordable, sustainable and viable transport option on the Sunshine Coast. However if you have the option, Joe recommends driving a car to get the most out of the area.

"It's better owning a car on the Sunshine Coast if you want to explore the region," he says. "Whilst buses are able to reach most places here, especially key infrastructure and popular tourist destinations, driving a car is the more convenient option."

If you aren't able to own a car outright, you could always consider renting a car if you wanted to do some day trips to the surrounding regions.

3. Get ready to learn some slang words

While locals may know their 'avos' from their 'arvos', familiarising yourself with classic Australian slang can be quite the adjustment for those coming to the country for the first time.

"The Aussie slang is really something no one could ever prepare themselves for," says Joe.

But instead of feeling alienated, Joe saw this as a learning experience.

“It was exciting to learn the meaning behind Aussie slang words. I saw it as part of embracing the culture of the country I decided to become a part of,” says Joe. “I’m still learning new slang words – even to this day!”

4. Despite being regional, the Sunshine Coast is still bustling

Not only is the Sunshine Coast one of the most popular regions in Queensland, but it’s also one of the most popular regions in Australia. This means that the region can get busy during periods such as long weekends and school holidays.

“While I consider myself to be living in paradise, the streets and popular tourist destinations in the region can get heavily crowded during holiday seasons,” says Joe.

If you’re on the Sunshine Coast during one of these busy periods, you can use it as an opportunity to explore some of the lesser-known spots in the region or spend time unwinding in the comfort of your own home instead.

Otherwise, you can embrace it! Head out amongst the crowds and soak up the atmosphere!

5. The Sunshine Coast is a UNESCO Biosphere

In 2022, the Sunshine Coast was declared a Biosphere by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

A biosphere is an international site of excellence recognised by UNESCO as an area of natural beauty where active conservation sits alongside sustainable living and development.

“This is well-deserved recognition for the undoubted beauty of the Sunshine Coast, but also the region’s ongoing commitment to sustainability,” says Joe.

“If there is a piece of the Sunshine Coast that I wish I could bring back to my home country, it would be practising sustainable living consistently to minimise the impact of human consumption of goods on the environment.”

Moving Day Advice: What To Do While Movers Are Moving

Moving is a challenging and strenuous process even for people who have moved before. Therefore, hire a professional removal service in Sunshine Coast to ease the burden and make your house move less stressful. When the removalists arrive on the moving day, follow the tips shared above while movers are moving your things.



1. Finish Decluttering & Packing

Get rid of trash and declutter the household as soon as the moving date is confirmed to decrease the handling/transporting load for your hired removalists in Sunshine Coast. Additionally, make sure you finish packing property contents a day before moving to ensure the professionals can do their work smoothly upon arrival. Don't make the mistake of leaving packing things until the last minute, as it will cause delays and disrupt the schedule of your removalists.

2. Avoid Giving Orders To Removalist's

While your hired movers are handling and moving your belongings remain polite and out of their way. Avoid the urge to give orders or tell the professionals how they should complete a task, as it is insubordinate and unwelcome. Removalists hired through a reputed removalists in Sunshine Coast have experience, a checklist and training to complete their tasks efficiently and effectively.

3. Provide Refreshment To The Professionals

Maintain basic courtesy and make the removalists feel welcome by offering snacks and drinks when the removalists arrive on the moving day. This step is crucial to build a rapport with the professionals and ensure they can do their work with full energy. Offering refreshments is important, especially when you are moving during the summers or peak season when the removalists can get dehydrated or strained easily.

4. Be Ready To Move Immediately Upon Arrival Of Removalists

Before your hired movers arrive to pack and move your things, make sure your essential bag is packed plus, your property contents are wrapped and boxed. Tell everyone involved in the moving process about the arrival time of the removalists to ensure they are mentally prepared to move. Additionally, complete all your before moving tasks to ensure you are ready to vacate the property when the removalists come.

5. Don't Add To The Moving Load At The Last Moment

Avoid shopping for new things a few days before the removalists arrive for moving your things. Most reputed removalists conduct a pre-move survey during which they create an inventory and provide an estimated cost of packing and moving accordingly. When you add new things without informing the professionals, it can catch them off-guard and delay the entire process. Additionally, buying new things before a move is never a good idea because you cannot be sure the items will fit in the new home or you can pay for the increased moving costs.

6. Keep Children/Pets Out Of Harm's Way

When the removalists are handling and moving your things, kids and pets can get in their way without proper supervision. Their interference can delay the entire process and cause toppling of furniture, appliances or boxes, leading to injuries of the professionals and your loved ones. Therefore, make sure the pets and children are in a comfortable and safe room when the removalists are doing their work. Alternatively, you can send your children and pets into the care of a trusted person for a few days to keep them out of harm's way and ensure the house move goes smoothly.

7. Label Everything Correctly

While packing your things, make sure to label boxes properly. It will help the removalists identify the contents and handle them accordingly. For example, label glassware, crockery, antiques, and other delicate items as 'fragile' to ensure the professionals handle them correctly, load them last on the moving truck and unload them first.

8. Help The Removalists Navigate Through Your Home

Remain available for your hired removalists in Sunshine Coast when they arrive at your property to help navigate through your home. Keep the pathways, hallways, and entry points clear to ensure the professionals can move back and forth without any hassle or obstruction.

A local's guide to the Sunshine Coast: 'There's more variety and natural beauty in the hinterlands'

The Sunshine Coast is on land traditionally owned by the Kabi Kabi/Gubbi Gubbi and Jinibara peoples. It runs from the Glass House mountains in the south, and north to Noosa – about a 50-minute drive on the Bruce Highway.

It's known as a family friendly holiday destination where you can rent a nice apartment right on the beach. But I think there's more variety and natural beauty in the hinterlands. I'm based in the idyllic town of Mapleton, a 30-minute drive inland. It's lush rainforest country with lots of waterfalls.



The dining scene hinges on a laid-back beach vibe where you get fresh produce and great culinary experiences in casual settings.

The owners of Mapleton Public House also run the organic Falls Farm, which supplies produce to many top restaurants. The chef, Cameron Matthews, updates the menu often and the wine list is Australia-forward. It's in a classic Queenslander building with a wraparound veranda overlooking the Blackall Range and out to the ocean.



Terella Brewing in North Arm is my favourite brewery. On the weekends you bring a picnic blanket, hit up the food trucks and listen to live music on the lawn. It has a petting zoo for kids, too. Last year, Matso's opened its first outpost outside Western Australia in Eumundi. It has a big outdoor beer garden and great food.

At Piggyback in Palmwoods you can get a bao bun and a spicy margarita and eat with your shoes off. It's owned by Tony Kelly who's behind Rice Boi in Mooloolaba and Giddy Geisha in Maroochydore. They're all great. My local secret is in the cute mountain town of Montville. The Neapolitan-style pizza at

Fiorio & Co is unmissable! Get it takeaway and find a lookout on the range to watch the sunset.

My hot tips for coffee are The Island Surf & Espresso in Mudjimba, Nambour Social and Ours at Moffat Beach.



Green spaces

I do Kondalilla Falls circuit walk most mornings. The part to Picnic Creek waterfall is wheelchair accessible. The walk continues to the epic 80-metre drop of Kondalilla Falls and on to a deep rock pool at its base. It's really cold water so it's super busy in summer but, at 8am, I'm cleaning cobwebs off the trail. For serenity at any time, Flat Rock is a swimming hole in the rainforest on an offshoot of the same track.

Mount Coolum is busy at all hours so my tip is to climb Mount Ninderry instead. It's not as sun- or height-exposed and you're in the bush for most of the 45-minute walk. I grab a smoothie at Gun Cotton Coffee Roasters afterwards.

The Blackall Range was heavily logged, with the exception of Mary Cairncross scenic reserve, so it has the old-growth rainforest that once covered the area: huge fig trees and soaring bunya nut pines. The information centre has really skilled volunteers and the walk is easy. There are lots of red-legged pademelons and a bat colony that roosts behind Maleny library.



The platypus walk along Obi Obi Creek allegedly has more platypuses per kilometre of waterway than anywhere else. They're easier to see in the early morning but turtles, bush rats and water dragons are worth looking out for. My favourite spot to swim is Tea Tree Bay in Noosa national park. It's less crowded than the main beach, the water seems calmer and there's always a tree to sit under.

Nightlife

The Sunshine Coast has a "get up early" mentality. The beach is crowded by 6am because locals go before work; they're out having coffee at 6am too. Part

of the reason is there's not much to do at night – even the restaurants close early.



The Indigenous-owned Saltwater Eco Tours glides through the Mooloolaba canals. Its evening trip has incredible bush-tucker-forward canapés, cocktails and live music on an old restored wooden yacht. You motor quietly along looking at rich people's homes. It cruises past the (Steve) Irwin family home – a boat with a crocodile painted on the side is outside.

My spot for sundowners is Sunshine Beach Surf Club. It has a patio with an ocean view and you have a good chance of getting a table outdoors. Mapleton Public House has live music in a room that only fits about 50 people so it's a lovely, intimate experience. Malaney's Spill Wine bar is more inner-west Sydney than the usual bohemian hippy vibes here. They serve wines you wouldn't find elsewhere and delicious small bites.

Inspiration

My personal favourite is the Rangebow festival in August – our own pride festival. It does a legendary drag show where experienced drag queens teach keen learners costumes and personas for a finale performance. The show is in the tiny Maleny community hall but the production quality is really high.

Eumundi markets is well known and loved but the locals prefer Yandina country market (Saturdays), which specialises in plants. Witta market (monthly) is hyper local but it's so nice to sit on the grass and listen to the music. After Witta, continue to the cheesery at Kenilworth Dairies for a sampler pack of its cheese or other great picnic food.

The op-shopping here is amazing; it's not picked-over or overpriced. There's heaps of 50s and 60s clothing here too but it's pricier. My favourite curated vintage shop is Collective Haus.

Neighbourhood

Everybody says that up-and-coming suburb Peregrine Beach is the next Noosa. It puts on the bougiest market on the Sunshine Coast. Linen beats out the hemp and everything is a shade of tan or beige. If you're seeking a designer hat, Peregrine Beach is the spot.

Accommodation

The historic Maleny Lodge (studio room from \$200/whole house from \$1,200) has claw-foot tubs, antique furniture and a pool. It's a lovely winter stay; a whiskey by the fire, that kind of thing. Habitat Noosa is an eco camp setup on Lake Cootharaba, getting up into the Noosa everglades. The options range from unpowered campsites (from \$35) to glamping (from \$210) and it has the biggest kangaroos you'll ever see. Eumundi's Imperial hotel (from \$220) is prided for its local art and fab spot across from the markets.



A smart place for business

As Australian businesses look outside major cities to establish, relocate or expand, Queensland's Sunshine Coast is firmly in the spotlight.

The Sunshine Coast offers opportunities in a diverse range of growth industries, an emerging city centre which is already becoming a vibrant commercial and leisure precinct and a local government that supports new and existing businesses to establish and grow.

Over the past 15 years, economic growth on the Sunshine Coast has outperformed almost every other regional economy in Australia, sparking a wave of new residential, office and retail development.

The booming economy is being propelled forward by a highly educated, highly motivated workforce and a uniquely entrepreneurial culture.

A nationally recognised lifestyle location with 300 days of sunshine a year, the Sunshine Coast boasts an abundance of outstanding natural assets including

52 kms of beautiful beaches, freshwater rivers and lakes and 39,835 hectares of subtropical forests and national parks.



Source: *economy.id, Sunshine Coast Region*

Future focused

Be perfectly positioned to tackle bold new ways of working and embrace new opportunities emerging from a changing world.

- ✓ Developments featuring co-working areas that accommodate hybrid work from office and work from home models (or hub and spoke models); end of trip facilities for bike commuters; and spaces that facilitate collaboration and innovation.
- ✓ Leading region in cyber security including a centre for cyber security excellence and part of a network to fast track the sector in Australia.
- ✓ Commercial space under development with five star NABERS energy rating.
- ✓ One of the highest levels of startup businesses in the country.

Fast facts

Connections

- ✓ Sunshine Coast International Broadband Network
- ✓ Fastest east coast data connection to Asia
- ✓ Sunshine Coast Airport international runway
- ✓ Mass transit solution detailed planning underway

- ✓ An hour north of Brisbane



III. How Can I Apply for a Visa to Live in Australia?

To live in Australia, you must apply for a permanent visa to become a permanent resident. This requires you to obtain one of the following from the Australian government:

- ✓ Family sponsorship visa
- ✓ Employee sponsorship visa
- ✓ Business or investment-stream visa
- ✓ Retirement pathway visa
- ✓ Student visa for international students

With one of these visas, you can become a permanent resident of Australia and eventually apply for citizenship, if you so choose. To apply for citizenship, you must have:

- ✓ Lived in Australia on a valid visa for a minimum of four years
- ✓ Spent no more than 12 months out of the last four years outside of Australia

- ✓ Spent no more than 90 days out of the last 12 months outside of Australia, prior to applying for citizenship

You can also apply for Australian citizenship if one of your parents was a citizen of the country at the time of your birth in a foreign country. Visit the Department of Home Affairs website to learn more information about the forms and requirements for Australian immigration and citizenship.

IV. The Cost Of Living

One of the biggest barriers for a lot of expats is the high cost of living in Australia, particularly in its main cities. The biggest expense is accommodation. Especially if you choose to live in Sunshine Coast, one of the Australia's most expensive cities.



Inflation, Soaring Living Costs Cause Large Increase In The Living Wage On The Sunshine Coast

The living wage has gone up to \$24.30 an hour on the Sunshine Coast, a significant increase over the 2021 rate of \$19.79, the most recent living wage update shows.

The living wage is the hourly wage that two adults working full-time need to earn to support the basic expenses of a family of four, once government taxes, credits, deductions, and subsidies are considered. It does not include debt repayment or savings for future plans.

The Sunshine Coast has seen a 22.8 per cent increase (\$4.51) from last year, when a full Living Wage Report was published by the Sunshine Coast Foundation alongside Living Wage for Families BC. Other communities across the province that have seen staggering living wage increases include Kelowna at \$4.39 (23.7 per cent) higher than last year's rate of \$18.49, Victoria at \$3.83 (18.7 per cent) higher than last year's \$20.46 and Metro Vancouver at \$3.56 (17.3 per cent) higher than last year's \$20.52.

"Life on the Coast is increasingly expensive, and we know that more and more families are turning to local charities to meet their essential needs," said Foundation Board Chair Manjit Kang. "The sizeable increase in the living wage helps explain how much they are falling behind."

Across BC, the living wage has increased in all communities where it has been calculated in the past. The jump is driven by the rapidly rising costs of two essential family expenses: food and shelter.

"With general inflation shooting up to a 40-year high this year, and with the cost of food rising even faster and rent increasing everywhere, especially for families that need to move and are no longer protected by rent control, it's not surprising to see such big increases this year," says Anastasia French, Living Wage for Families provincial manager.

At \$24.30 per hour, the Sunshine Coast now claims the third highest living wage among those updated in 2022, right behind Golden (\$25.56) and Daajing Giids (Haida Gwaii) (\$25.87).

Across the board, housing remains the most expensive item in a family's budget. The median monthly rent for a modest three-bedroom unit on the Coast, including utilities, insurance, and internet, has gone up by \$212.37 to \$2,217.89 (an increase of 10.6 per cent).

At the same time, according to the latest BC food costing survey data, the price of groceries needed for a healthy diet for a family with two young children has spiked sharply. Since 2021, Coasters' monthly food costs have escalated to \$1,238.15, an increase of \$266 per month (27.4 per cent).

"Until this year the living wage across most of BC remained below its 2018 peak because policy changes introduced by the BC provincial government significantly improved affordability for families with young children and offset increases in the cost of food, housing and other essentials," says Iglia Ivanova, senior economist at CCPA-BC.

"However, the savings generated by these policy changes, including significant child care investments and the elimination of MSP premiums, have now been effectively wiped out by ballooning rent and food costs," she adds.

Plus, a strikingly large gap exists between the 2022 living wages for communities across BC and the province's minimum wage (currently \$15.65 per hour). While many BC employers see the value of paying living wages (with nearly 400 certified Living Wage Employers across the province), Ivanova explains the labour market alone cannot solve all problems of poverty and social exclusion.

"Good public policy can make life more affordable for families and when government transfers don't keep up with the rising cost of living, the families hardest hit are headed by already marginalized earners, including single mothers, Indigenous people and recent immigrants," Ivanova says.

Living wage employers include small businesses, non-profit organizations, unions, and cooperatives. These employers have committed to pay all their direct staff and contract employees a living wage and to require their major service providers to also pay a living wage, including for janitorial, security and food service contracts.

V. Important Things To Do After You Arrive

This is a helpful list to help you understand the important things you must do in your first weeks after you have arrived.

Check list

- ✓ Get an Australian phone number
- ✓ Apply for a tax file number (TFN)
- ✓ Open a bank account
- ✓ Register with Medicare
- ✓ Contact Centrelink
- ✓ Find a family doctor
- ✓ Translate important documents
- ✓ Apply for a drivers licence
- ✓ Enrol your children at school
- ✓ Sign up for free English classes

Final Words

Living on the Sunshine Coast as an expat is an exciting and rewarding experience, offering a perfect mix of natural beauty, modern amenities, and a welcoming community. With the right preparation and understanding of local life, you can easily settle in and make the most of what this stunning region has to offer. Embrace the coastal lifestyle, explore new opportunities, and enjoy your new home in the Sunshine Coast!

References

Living on the Sunshine Coast | Sunshine Coast Council, Retrieved January 28, 2025 From,

<https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/living-and-community/community-support/multicultural-welcome-hub/living-on-the-sunshine-coast>

Inflation, soaring living costs cause large increase in the living wage on the Sunshine Coast | Sunshine Coast Foundation, Retrieved January 28, 2025 From,

<https://sunshinecoastfoundation.org/inflation-soaring-living-costs-cause-large-increase-in-the-living-wage-on-the-sunshine-coast/>

5 Things I Wish I Knew Before Moving To The Sunshine Coast | Insider Guides, Retrieved January 28, 2025 From,

<https://insiderguides.com.au/things-i-wish-i-knew-before-moving-to-the-sunshine-coast/>

A Local's Guide To The Sunshine Coast: 'There's More Variety And Natural Beauty In The Hinterlands' | The Guardian, Retrieved January 28, 2025 From,

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2024/dec/07/a-locals-guide-to-the-sunshine-coast-food-dining-local-attractions-activities-what-to-do>

Living In Australia As An Expat | International Citizens, Retrieved January 29, 2025 From,

<https://www.internationalcitizens.com/living-abroad/australia.php>

Moving Day Advice: What To Do While Movers Are Moving | Better Removalists Sunshine Coast, Retrieved January 29, 2025 From,

<https://www.betterremovalistssunshinecoast.com.au/moving-day-advice-what-to-do-while-movers-are-moving/>