

LIFE begins at...

The Splendour of Sydney



It's a city of extraordinary beauty and appeal! Perhaps more than any other Australian City and as *Imogen A. Rose* discovers, it offers a remarkable combination of location, atmosphere, natural, and architectural beauty. Of all the Capital Cities – it is Sydney that seems to loom largest, in terms of image and prestige. It has something of the allegorical Big Smoke about it, a place to find adventure and chase dreams.

Sydney is significant, in terms of Australian history. The earliest European settlement took place with the arrival of the First Fleet of British Ships in 1788 at Port Jackson and the subsequent naming of Sydney Cove. Here one finds The Rocks, a fascinating area with wonderful, historic streets and lanes to meander, tempting eateries, parks and recreational areas.



Old warehouses at Campbell's Cove Jetty in Sydney

One of the best places to base yourself is at the Shangri-La Hotel at The Rocks. Indeed, the panoramic views from the Hotel highlight the inescapable yoking of past and present. All around there are subtle signs of a colonial past within a fast-paced modern city. Furthermore, this area enables the visitor to venture by foot to explore many iconic landmarks, including the Sydney Harbour Bridge, Circular Quay and the Sydney Opera House. Of course, no trip to Sydney would be complete without taking a ferry upon the harbour!

The Shangri-La is an impressive structure built for views, with a design inspired by a lighthouse concept. Located on the 36th floor is Altitude, the Hotel's award winning restaurant. It offers exceptional fine dining within a truly spectacular setting. The panorama is a flawless view of Sydney Harbour – the world's largest natural harbour – in all its simplistic, yet sublime, glory. This is quite possibly the 'box seat' of Sydney Restaurants!

One of the best ways to enjoy Sydney is to immerse yourself in the culture. For instance, why not attend a show at the Sydney Theatre Company? The STC has launched the careers of many acclaimed Australian artists including Cate Blanchett, Mel Gibson, Toni Collette, Hugo Weaving and Richard Roxburgh.

STC Artistic Director, Kip Williams, enthuses that 2017 is another exciting year for audiences. Highlights include a musical version of one of Australia's most iconic films, *Muriel's Wedding: The Musical* (6 Nov 2017 – 20 Jan 2018).



In terms of cultural highlights, it would be impossible to surpass the Sydney Opera House. This is Australia's most recognizable building and for good reason. Indeed, to visit this iconic structure and to behold its presence is awe-inspiring. There are regular site tours that offer wonderful insight into the pioneering concept of its Danish architect, Jørn Utzon. A walk within the labyrinth-like inner structure brings to life the meticulous, intricate detail, the daunting scale, and the problem-plagued path that eventually led to its much heralded realization.

Located within the Opera House is the superb Bennelong Restaurant. Surprisingly, despite the grand majesty of the Opera House, one feels quite at home within the restaurant's unique, intimate and dignified setting. The restaurant is well-known for its award-winning and inventive cuisine. It is favoured by tourists and Sydney-siders alike. It has all the epochal elements, especially at night-time when moonlight beams through the glass ceiling and the twinkling lights of the romantic harbour-scape may cause you to wonder if indeed it is possible to "Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand. And Eternity in an hour".

The Sydney Opera House epitomizes the quintessential wonder and beauty of Sydney.

And it is this indisputable beauty that internationally renowned artist, Ken Done, has consistently captured on canvas.

Done's, Matisse like, brilliant use of colour, seems to operate synergistically with the landscape. His work is on display at The Ken Done Gallery at The Rocks – exquisitely embrace the wonder of Australia. A potent creativity breathes life into each canvas with marvellous myriads of colour that resonate a resounding joy, a pure joy, perhaps even something of *sehnsucht*.



Done aims to create paintings that "give people pleasure over a long period of time".

Many of his most popular paintings are of Sydney Harbour, and or, the Sydney Opera House. As a native, the artist had the pleasure of experiencing Sydney before, and after, the construction of the Opera House. He remembers returning to Sydney following a period in England, to discover this "miraculous, beautiful, awe-inspiring building" that he has painted so often. "Sometimes I've felt it rather literally but most of the time, in fact the majority of the time, I paint it with what it makes me feel". Done describes the wonderful alignment of Sydney's architectural landscape as viewed from the Opera House, "especially at night, especially at dusk and you're beside the skyline of Sydney Harbour looking across to the Bridge, all of those icons together in one space...it's great".

If Sydney has spectacular aesthetics, it also has amazing atmosphere. In order to really strike a chord with this atmosphere, one must engage with the sporting face of Sydney. More specifically, its Olympic Legacy.

The impact of the Sydney Olympics was transformative and multi-faceted. Sydney born, International Olympic Committee Vice-President, John Coates – one of the most respected and capable individuals in the world of sport – was instrumental in successfully bidding for the 2000 Olympics.

It's impossible not to gain a vicarious pleasure listening to Coates's animated description of what it felt like to be present, and participant, at the Opening Ceremony. Coates also recalls the generous spirit Australians demonstrated as hosts. This spirit was evident to millions during the Olympics and importantly, this sense of benevolent hospitality continues to flourish today.

Certainly, the Games created "wonderful Olympic sporting venues" that remain in full-time use. Moreover, the Olympic Park boasts some 430 hectares of Parklands and is home to hundreds of species of plants, birds, frogs, bats, reptiles and fish – providing a wonderful opportunity to spot endangered animals including the Green and Golden Bell frog.

Sydney really is an exciting and energetic destination.

In Sydney, it is as though the sun is shining on you – literally and metaphorically. Orange bounces off the splendid roof of the Opera House, its copper reflection upon the water ignites a brilliant sparkle in your eyes, intermittent rays of light enrobe you as you cross the Harbour bridge. And the warmth will lift your heart at the sheer joy of so much beauty and the evocation of emotion. For in many ways, Sydney's appeal lies in the way it makes people feel, as much as its incredible surroundings. Go on, explore Sydney!

ABOUT

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