Club eX (Mac Uni Xchange Students’ Club) presents:

What Do I Do With That Weekend?

Well mates, you’ve reached Oz and there’s heaps of time to get out there and check out some of the sensational places around Sydney. This little compilation of things to do includes some weekend trips or day trips – all of which can be done using public transport (unless otherwise stated). Basically we’re trying to get you out there to see all the best stuff without having to take expensive tours, and to have the best experiences by doing it yourself. Needless to say, these are just a few recommendations and not a definitive list, but it’ll give you a good start.

Here’s a summary of the trips included:

Outside Sydney
- Port Stephens weekend
- Hawks Nest (Port Stephens northern shore)
- Newcastle overnight or for a day
- The Central Coast
- Blue Mountains for the adventurers
- Blue Mountains for the coffee shop go-ers
- South Coast Wollongong and beyond
- Jervis Bay
- Hunter Valley
- Canberra (are you sure?)

Inside Sydney
- Some cool places to eat and drink
- A dozen daytrips to see some Australiana

Good luck and, most importantly, have fun. Be safe out there – always research your destination and current conditions before heading out – these are places we recommend, but some things change or can’t be controlled!
If we can help you out at all organising a trip, just email us.

The Club eX Team
Port Stephens: The Blue Water Wonderland

**Description:** Port Stephens is one of the largest harbours on the east coast of Australia, it is 2.5 times bigger and significantly deeper than Sydney Harbour. It’s characterised by crystal clear blue waters, pristine beaches, isolated inlets and magnificent national parks. Port Stephens also harbours one of Australia’s only resident populations of over 150 bottlenose dolphins and some tour operators in the area boast that dolphins are sighted on over 95% of their cruises. Not a place where the nightlife pumps until 3am, but the fishing is unbelievable, the beaches incomparable, and the experience priceless. In the warmer months, this is one of the best weekend escapes near Sydney. If you don’t see Port Stephens while you’re in Australia then you’ve really missed out.

**Ease of access:** Easy – regular trains and buses service Nelson Bay, the main township. There are also direct coaches from Central Station (contact a travel agent to make bookings)

**Budget:** about $200- $250 should cover you for 2-3 days here, including your transport, accommodation, food, a cruise out to see the dolphins with some change left over for a beer or two

**Rated:** * * * * +

**Getting there:** Train to Newcastle followed by a bus to Nelson Bay or Shoal Bay

Trains to Newcastle leave Epping Station every hour and arrive in Newcastle about 2hrs 20mins later. Call Transport Infoline for exact times: 131 500

Time your train well – there are express trains some hours and all-station trains on the alternate hours. You don’t want to accidently get on an all-stations train…trust me….

Buses to Port Stephens leave from bus bay 3 at Newcastle Station. Leave the station, turn left towards the foreshore and you will see the bus bays adjacent to the station between the station and the road along the foreshore.

Buses run roughly every hour from about 6am-5pm, and the coach line is operated by Port Stephens Coaches (02) 4982 2940, [http://pscoaches.com.au](http://pscoaches.com.au)

With a concession card it’ll probably cost about $20 to get there one-way. Without a concession card it’ll be closer to $30 or $35. For more info on bus/train fares and times call Infoline on 131500 (trains), or the Port Stephens Coaches.

The Tourist Information is at Nelson Bay and all the cruises on the harbour depart from the port there.
Where to stay: The cheapest place to stay in Port Stephens is the YHA backpackers at Shoal Bay (which is part of a hotel complex). It offers bunk room accommodation for around $20 per night for YHA members (a couple of bucks extra for non-members), or you can get a double/family room with en-suite for $30. Calling ahead to reserve a bed is mandatory (they only have a small number of beds and are generally pretty busy). Their number is 4981 0982, or email shoalbaymotel@bigpond.com.

There are other backpacker places around and a quick look on the internet will probably locate them for you.

What to do: Nelson Bay and Shoal Bay are only quite small and are pretty easy to get around by foot. There is a tourist info place at Nelson Bay who can help you out with all your plans (you can go waterskiing, biking in the sand dunes and lots of other adventurous things).

A few DEFINITE things to do: - Definitely take a boat cruise out onto the harbour, it is spectacular
  - Take a walk up Tomaree Headland at Shoal Bay, it is an easy walk up a graded path and has the most breathtaking view you will ever see. I think this is easily the best thing to do in Port Stephens (and it’s free!)
  - Check out the surf beaches: Zenith, Wreck or Box Beach
  - Relax and enjoy the sun – that’s what this place is known for!

There will be tourist info sites on the net for Port Stephens, so have a look around. This is a classic Australian trip. Have fun!
Hawks Nest, Tea Gardens and Myall Lakes: beaches, dunes, rivers and the best bakery ever

**Description:** If you want to be a bit more adventurous than going to where the tourists go then this little trip is probably more your style. Hawks Nest lies on the northern shore of Port Stephens (almost opposite Shoal Bay), and is within walking distance of the northern headland of the harbour, the wonderful Yacaaba Headland. Hawks Nest is perfectly nestled between Port Stephens and the ocean and as a result has two sensational sets of beaches – the calm waters of the harbour, and the awesome surf beach, which extends some 20km to the north and out of site towards Seal Rocks. It is my favourite town on the east coast of Australia and is certainly worth a weekend. The bakery is brilliant, the sand dunes are incredible, the beach is stunning (you’ll get no better sunrise and sunset photos than here) and it is quiet, clean and friendly. The next town across (Tea Gardens) has a great pub and is on the Myall River where you will find great fishing and can rent boats to go cruising around. If you get the chance, this is probably one of the best coastal towns that you will visit in Australia.

**Ease of access:** Moderate – regular trains to Newcastle, but buses to Hawks Nest run at generally inconvenient times.

**Budget:** about $120-180 should cover you for 2-3 days here, including your transport, accommodation and food

**Rated:** * * * *

**Getting there:** Train to Newcastle followed by a bus to Nelson Bay or Shoal Bay
Trains to Newcastle leave Epping Station at forty minutes past every hour and arrive in Newcastle about 2hrs 20mins later. Call Transport Infoline for exact times: 131 500

Buses to Hawks Nest depart at odd times (call Great Lakes Coaches 49831560)
The bus timetable is below:

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Because the bus only leaves once on the weekends, I recommend that you plan to either leave on Friday or get back on Monday (i.e. catch the 3:30pm bus to H.N. from Newcastle on Friday, or catch the early bus home from H.N. to New. on Monday morning), otherwise you’ll not get to spend much time at Hawks Nest itself. If you try to go just for Sat/Sun, you’ll get to H.N. at 4pm and will have to leave at 12pm the next day – all that way for less than 24 hrs! Leave on Friday or get back on Monday. It’ll cost you $16 one way with concession (for train and bus) and $30 without.
Where to stay: The best (cheap) places to stay in Hawks Nest are either Hawks Nest Beach Caravan Park (adjacent to the surf beach) or Jimmy’s Beach Caravan Park (adjacent to Port Stephens). For their phone numbers (or information on other places to stay in the area) call Tea Gardens tourist info on 4997 0111.

What to do there: Hawks Nest is a place to go to totally relax. Outside of school holidays it is very quiet and peaceful. Assuming you have two full days (and you will if you leave Fri/Mon!!!), then here is a little list of things you can do:

- Climb Yacaaba Headland – walk along the beach and up the headland. The views are spectacular and the walk is hard but rewarding (you will need shoes). Walking along the beach is awesome in itself. All up, leave about 3 hours to walk to the top and back – believe me, it IS worth it. Be sure to bring food and water.
- Go to the sand dunes – walk towards the headland and you’ll come across a huge system of sand dunes (years ago they were much bigger but erosion is whittling them down) about half a kilometre up the beach. This is a magnificent place to come at night (yes, it’s totally safe) to look at the lights of Nelson Bay. This is a place to watch the sunrise, for sure.
- Check out the Myall Country Bakery (in Hawks Nest) or The Pie Man (in Tea Gardens). The Kookaburra Café in Tea Gardens makes a great breakfast and there is a fantastic ice creamery next door.
- Go fishing on the Myall River (Tea Gardens) or have a game of golf at Hawks Nest.
- Grab a beer at Tea Gardens pub and walk home across the ‘Singing Bridge’.
- Soak up the surf and the sand at Hawks Nest Beach – it’s an incredible spot.
- Some dolphin watch tours run from Tea Gardens.

If anyone is interested in going to Hawks Nest, drop by the Mac Abroad Office in the SAM building for more details. The staff at Mac Abroad are more than happy to help you out! If you have the chance, then this is a beautiful spot that a lot of Sydney-siders don’t know about, so you should see it. It is Nelson Bay’s quiet alter-ego, and shouldn’t be hard to convince you to go there!

Good luck.
Newcastle: Beaches, Bogey Hole and The Brewery

**Description:** Just two hours north of Sydney on the train takes you to Newcastle, an awesome city with sensational beaches, friendly people and great pubs. It’s really small, so you can easily walk around it in a day, but there are enough good hostels, pubs and nightlife to warrant staying overnight – take your pick. I can’t rave enough about Newcastle, it’s about 100 times less pretentious and more down to earth than Sydney. It’s got history, scenery, continuity and The Queens Wharf Brewery (one of the bestest pubs ever). Newcastle is one of the easiest, but the best, day trips that you can take.

**Ease of access:** Simple – trains run every hour to and from Newcastle, up until the 2:47am, so you can even go out for a night there and come home!

**Budget:** Train fare is about $18 day return, for a concession ($9 one way), or somewhere around $25 for non-concessions. Other than that you can spend as little or as much as you like – beer and food is significantly cheaper there than here in Sydney.

**Rated:** Very very highly!

**Getting there:** Take a train from Epping (weekdays) or Hornsby (weekends) to Newcastle station. The train ride is 2hrs 20mins (2hrs from Hornsby). The station is right in the heart of Newcastle just minutes from the beach, there’s nowhere else you need to travel to.

**What to do there:** See the map below. Here is a rough list: Nobbys Lighthouse/beach, The Breakwall, Newcastle Beach, The Bogey Hole, Fort Scratchley / Strezlecki, The Obelisk, St Andrew’s (? I think that’s its name) Cathedral, The Phallic Tower (not its real name), a trip on the ferry to Stockton and walking to Stockton Breakwall. Then Derby Street for whatever type of food you’re looking for, followed by a beer or two at one of the following fine establishments: The Carrington, The Grand, The Great Northern, The Queens Wharf Brewery (Newcastle’s best pub – right on the foreshore with a ‘beer garden’ out on the wharf! Plenty of good home brew beers, and they serve pints if you’re an Englishman who’s feeling like a schooner just isn’t enough!)
The Central Coast

**Description:** The Central coast is a little less easy to see strictly by public transport, but should still be worth the effort. There is a magnificent walk along the Brisbane Waters inlet system (it’s like a giant river/lake that is spread all over the central coast), that runs from Woy Woy to Point Claire, and there are regular buses that run the 20km or so out to the surf beaches. The key with the Central Coast is to **know where you’re going before you go there**, because the best things are a little bit scattered.

**Ease of access:** Trains to get you to the Coast are very frequent (every 30 mins or so), but once you’re there transport to various attractions is a bit more difficult. **PLAN AHEAD** and you’ll be totally fine.

**Budget:** Train fare is about $8-12 day return, for a concession ($6 one way), or somewhere around $10-15 for non-concessions. Other than that you can spend as little or as much as you.

**Rated:** Pretty cool, and a nice escape from Sydney, either for the day or the weekend.

**Getting there:** Trains run to Gosford or Woy Woy (on the coast) every 30 minutes or so from Epping. Plan your trip, though, connecting buses are often sparse in abundance! Call 131 500 for more transport information about the Central Coast.

**What to do there:** Plenty of cool places around the Coast. Avoca Beach is really beautiful if you want to catch a bus out there, otherwise Terrigal is really cool (the only decent nightclub on the Coast is there, called Key Largo). Take a walk along Brisbane waters from Woy Woy to Point Claire (8 spectacular kilometres), visit Old Sydney Town or the Wildlife Park (shuttle buses run to and from these places to Gosford), go for a hike in Brisbane Waters National Park, or have a top meal at the Central Coast Leagues Club – cheap and tasty food.

The Central Coast is not what you’d call a tourist destination. There are a few good things to do and see there, so be sure to ask someone what to do there before you go. It’s definitely worth the trip if you have a spare day.

For more information, there is a freecall Central Coast tourist information number – 1300 130 708, or checkout [www.cctourism.com.au](http://www.cctourism.com.au)
They will help you sort out an awesome itinerary.

The Exchange Club will be running an afternoon and evening trip to the Coast to sample some of the fine drinking establishments around the area early after semester resumes, and that might be enough of a look at the coast for some! Keep an eye out for that event!
Blue Mountains: The tourist route

Description: The Blue Mountains to the west of Sydney should really need no introduction. Two hours on the train from Epping, if you haven’t been already then it is mandatory that you do – no excuse can be accepted! This spectacular region (now listed as a World Heritage Area) contains some of the best hiking near Sydney, some of the prettiest towns and spirit lifting views. Don’t be deceived - The tourists are going there for a reason! If you’re not such an adventurous person then there are still plenty of good things to do in the mountains, be it for a day or a weekend. If you are the psycho adventurous type, see ‘Blue Mountains: the adventurers’ backyard’. The tourist route through the mountains takes you to some incredible lookouts, some great towns with great shops and food, at minimal expense. There are a million and one tourist operators that run to the mountains, and if you’re not confident at doing it yourself, then there heaps of other ways you can get up there with a group. Remember, though, in the Mountains your creativity will be rewarded – it is the perfect place to try something new because a lot of the best views and experiences in the mountains are off the main tourist route.

Ease of access: Very easy – trains run hourly to and from Katoomba
Budget: You can spend anywhere between $60 and $200 in the Blue Mountains depending on what you want to do. $20 ($35 non-concessions) will get you up and back on the train (off peak times), and it costs about $25/night to stay at the Youth Hostel at Katoomba. Beyond those base costs, everything depends on what you want to spend.
Rated: ** * * * + (a compulsory stop for all travellers)

Getting there: Trains to Katoomba leave Strathfield Station at 13 minutes past every hour, collecting trains to Strathfield from Epping leave at about 20 minutes to every hour. Buy your ticket to Katoomba.

What to do there: When you get off the train at Katoomba, walk down the ramp and turn right at the bottom, then up the stairs. You will usually be ambushed here by tour operators trying to get you to join them.
The places to check out are:
- Echo Point – the Three Sisters and Jamison Valley
- Scenic Railway/Skyway/Ascender – on Cliff Drive, some really cool ways to see the Jamison Valley and get into a bit of rainforest
- Carrington Hotel (pub) at Katoomba is definitely the nicest place to have a beer in town
- There are plenty of good cafes and eateries in Katoomba
- Leura – town near Katoomba. Very beautiful, especially in the spring when the flowers are out. Also check out the Leura Lolly Shop
- Sublime Point, which has mad views over the Jamison Valley
- Zig Zag Railway – take a train to ‘Zig Zag’ railway station and you can ride the antique steam train up and down the escarpment
Wentworth Falls – Once again, only two stops from Katoomba. Walk out to the Wentworth Falls lookout where you will enjoy spectacular views of the Jamison, Wentworth Falls (brilliant cascading waterfalls and cliffs – esp. after rain) and Kings Tableland.

Glenbrook – a 15 min walk from the station will take you to the Blue Mountains National Park entrance – walk down the hill and checkout some of the amazing places in the park. The best spots (within walking distance) are: Red Hands Cave (genuine Aboriginal rock paintings), and the Jellybean and Blue Pools, which are incredible for swimming in when the weather is hot. If it is a warm day in the mountains, this is definitely the place to be.

Tours and stuff: There are endless numbers of tours the you can take, ranging from hiking to canyoning to anything you can imagine to do with the bush. Always shop around because you can usually get a good price – don’t forget to show student cards (ISIC is ok too), YHA membership cards or whatever else. You should be able to get about 5-10% off most tours just by playing a ‘poor student’, so be canny!

Remember, the bush is free – only pay for a tour if it involves somebody’s expertise (like night bushwalking or storytelling), if it involves specific equipment or risky activities. Tours are great if you really don’t know what you’re doing or are afraid to try stuff out – the YHA hostel also has a good range of tours that they offer.

Where to Stay: There are a couple of backpacker places in Katoomba, but by far the best is the YHA hostel. You can get shared rooms or twin rooms and it is very cheap (about $25 per person). The hostel itself is totally cool with full facilities and everything about it really rocks. Yes, you can stay for cheaper at other places, but this is by far the best spot in terms of centrality and comfort.

Be sure to book as far in advance as possible to get you choice of rooms, the YHA has a tendency to book out. It is located on the main street from town to Echo Point (207 Katoomba Street), and you can call them on (02) 4782 1416

Enjoy your trip.
Blue Mountains: The adventurer’s backyard

Description: If you’re a bit of the adventurous type but can’t get your fix in Sydney (we all understand), then a vast playground of adventures awaits in the west. A place where there are far too many trees to climb in one day. Regardless of your chosen outdoor fetish (except maybe skiing), the mountains should ably provide you with a place to test your skills (or lack of 😊). Hiking, rock climbing, mountain biking, abseiling, canyoning, caving, orienteering, rafting – this place has got the lot. There are far too many things to mention here that you could do in just one weekend in the mountains. So here is some general advice for planning a good trip.

1. The best spots in the mountains are almost exclusively off the tourist route, but the best places to stay and eat (in civilised style) are on it. Katoomba has the best hostel and some of the best places to eat and go to the pub.
2. The best lookouts and hikes often start away from public transport – but don’t be discouraged, there are ways around this problem! There are incredible trips that can be done around Blackheath, Wentworth Falls and Katoomba. If you’re prepared to walk a bit before getting out into the bush, then there’s just about nowhere that you can’t get to.
3. LOCAL KNOWLEDGE IS THE BEST KNOWLEDGE! Definitely ask someone when you’re planning your trip. The university has a bushwalking club, a caving club, a mountaineering club and heaps of others. There will be someone in these clubs who will know your perfect trip, so ask around.
4. Safety first – leave a detailed plan of where you’ll be and carry first aid. Getting stuck at the bottom of a canyon in horizontal rain with a mate with a broken leg who’s getting hypothermic is not fun, I assure you! Be prepared.

Some of the most accessible, but less touristy spots, are:
1. Ruined Castle and Mt Solitary: access from Katoomba and the Giant/Golden stairs
2. The Grand Canyon, Blue Gum Forest and Perry’s Lookdown – access from either Blackheath or Mt Victoria (need a map from this direction)
3. Wentworth Falls – the lower tracks, plenty of potential for exploration away from the grandparents and the kids!
4. Narrow Neck plateau – access via Katoomba and Cliff Drive
5. Woodford – some great mountain biking in around here

Camping: There are only four ‘designated’ camping areas in the mountains that I know of, they are the Euroka Clearing in the lower Blue Mountains (near Glenbrook), Murphy’s Glen (a magnificent area amongst the ironbarks and giant Blackbutts) which is near to Woodford, Perry’s Lookdown near Blackheath and Acacia Flat in the Grose Valley.

The Glen, Perry’s and Acacia definitely don’t have a charge for usage, but I’m not sure about The Clearing.
There are plenty of unofficial campsites all over the place – try Narrow Neck plateau, Mt Solitary or anywhere where there is a well marked track. Club eX doesn’t support the making of new campsites, try and be nice to the bush so it’ll be there for the next people to enjoy.

Be wary of your water supply, too. A lot of the creeks and rivers around many of the popular hiking and biking spots are contaminated by urban runoff. If you’re planning on getting lost, bring purification tablets or a filter.

**A final word:** A final word to anyone thinking of hitting up the mountains: there is limitless potential of things to do in this incredible wilderness area. I alone can think of in excessive of 53 128 494 trees that I would like to climb. You will not be disappointed if you make the time and effort to be a bit creative and go on an adventure – this goes for the hardy adventurers and everyone else alike.

Get stuck in!
Canberra: Capital of a nation...porn capital!

**Description:** Yes, Canberra is not only the official Capital of Australia, but its’ dubiously named suburb Fyshwick is also known as Australia’s Porn Capital. How’s that for trivia! Canberra is an odd sorta place – you’ll find it interesting and kinda cool, or you’ll hate it. It’s not really the sort of place you fall in love with. That doesn’t mean that it isn’t worth visiting, there is some stuff in Canberra that is definitely worth seeing. The inner city is symmetrically designed by Sir Walter Burley-Griffin, and is centred around, oddly enough, Lake Burley-Griffin. In Canberra you’ll find all the official stuff that makes up a national capital – this includes the National ‘everything’; National Gallery, National Science Museum, National War Memorial etc. It has one good nightclub, a few good pubs, plenty of buildings and a few great parks. The best thing is that it’s easily accessible by train from Sydney and is clean, wholly scenic and not a bad weekend away without any heart-wrenching excitement or tension. You will enjoy a trip here, but it’s not a place you go to if you just want to forget about everything...like assignments!

**Ease of access:** Moderate – Countrylink have two XPT train services to and from Canberra every day. Transport within Canberra is a little more difficult

**Budget:** The train will cost you about $55 concession ($90 without), hostel is about $25 night, and entry to some exhibits within Canberra ranges from free to $15-20

**Rated:** * * * + (or higher, depending on your interests)

**Getting there:** Trains to Canberra run daily – one morning and one evening train. For timetable information and to make bookings call CountryLink on 13 22 32

There are undoubtedly coaches running to and from Canberra but I’m unsure of which companies run the route. If you can’t get a train booking, try calling some of the major coach companies, like Greyhound or Murrays.

**Where to Stay:** There are a number of hostels in Canberra, a YHA and some independent backpackers as well. The YHA is out of town a little (it’s an $20 cab ride), and costs about $20/night (more for twin rooms). Their number is (02) 6248 9155, their address is 191 Dryandra St, O’Connor. There is also a great little hostel in town called the City Walk (2 Mort Street). It is right in the heart of town and is a great place to stay. It is a few dollars more expensive ($20-25/night), but is probably worth it. Their number is (02) 6257 0124. All the caravan parks and other budget accommodation is out of town a short way.

**What to do there:** There is plenty to do in Canberra for a couple of days, and it’s a really good place to check out if the weather is supposed to be a bit grey as most of the best things are indoors. Below is a list of the recommended stops within Canberra.

**Central Canberra:** Lake Burley-Griffin – beautiful to walk around or boat on – lookout
for the Captain Cook Memorial Water Jet
Parliament House – the New and the Old are both worth looking at if you’re
interested in seeing where Australia’s political hub gets itself going.
National Art Gallery – has some wonderful Australian and international
exhibits and some fantastic Aboriginal art as well
High Court – right next door to the Gallery, for those legally inclined
National Science and Technology Centre (Questacon) – I reckon this is the
coolest thing about Canberra. It has tons of exhibits and hands on
experiments that will keep entertained for a whole day. The Earthquake
machine will get you barging kids out of the way, and there is a great spider
exhibition. This is a mandatory stop.
Australian War Memorial – an inspiring tribute and history of Australia at
war both overseas and on the homefront. The War Memorial is on the far
side of the Lake but is also a mandatory stop.
P.J. O’Reilly’s Irish pub is one of the best with great food and cold
Guinness. The Moosehead and Wig & Pen are also pretty cool.
There are only two nightclubs in Canberra called ‘Pandora’s’, right in the
middle of town or ‘Heaven’, which is the gay nightclub. The Casino is not
far from the Centre of town and has a cheesy nightclub inside as well.

**Outer Canberra:** Unfortunately some of the great stuff is not within walking distance.
The Tidbinbilla Space Tracking Station is one of the largest radio telescopes in the
Southern Hemisphere, but is some 45-50km from Canberra to the south west. If you
can get there it is in a beautiful area and has its own Nature Reserve.
The Australian Institute of Sport is closer but still a fair way out. Tours there give an
inside look at elite sport in Australia.
Close to Canberra is Black Mountain and the Telstra Tower. This is a fabulously
beautiful area. The National Botanic Gardens are at the base of the mountain, and it is
possible to climb the tower for a small charge, this is a spectacular thing to do in the
evening with the sun setting and then viewing the lights of Canberra by night. You
won’t regret it!
Finally there’s the incongruous Fyshwick, the ‘porn capital’ of Australia. It’s well known
for its industry, illicit substances and fireworks. Yes, the ACT is the only place in
Australia where you can legally buy fireworks and Fyshwick is the best place for that.
(I have to do this, sorry: Club eX doesn’t support activities that are illegal in NSW 😊).
An interesting place to see, anyhow.

You certainly won’t be disappointed with a trip to Canberra, but be prepared to walk a lot. There are
kilometres of hallway stretching through all the galleries and exhibition. Rain or shine, you are
guaranteed a great trip to the National Capital. An ingenious way to get around might be by hiring a
bike. Canberra is renowned for its excitement catering of cyclists, particularly around central
Canberra and Lake Burley-Griffin. This would be my recommendation for mode of transport.
Be sure to book ahead, especially with the trains, as they tend to book out quite quickly.
The South Coast: beyond Wollongong

**Description:** As an Australian who has only ever driven past Wollongong, I’m unable to recommend anything about that city. The Education Abroad has copies of various travel books that have information about Wollongong and what to do there. Beyond Wollongong is a magnificent part of the south coast, quintessentially typified by cozy friendly towns, beautiful beaches and great bakeries. There is not a wealth of nightlife or daring and exciting things to do, but you will return from a trip here relaxed and enriched.

This trip focuses around the area of Kiama, Gerringong/Gerroa and inland to Jamberoo and Minnamurra. You will find pristine beaches galore, rainforest and hills – and of course, the Kiama Blowhole!

**Ease of access:** Phenomenally easy – Cityrail runs multiple services to and from the south coast daily (to Kiama/Gerringong, or Wollongong)

**Budget:** This is a good relaxing and cheap weekend. Beaches and rainforests are free! You could probably get away with spending $100 or less for the weekend.

**Rated:** 4/5 (perfect place to escape and relax)

**Getting there:** Trains depart hourly to Wollongong (and every two hours to Kiama/Gerringong) from Central Station. Call 131 500 for timetable details and cost of fares.

**Where to Stay:** There are two excellent places to stay on the south coast. The Kiama Backpackers is right next to the station and is on the wonderfully named Bong Bong Street (number 31). It’s about $15 a night or a little more for double rooms. Call them on: (02) 4233 1881, book ahead as they only have limited space.

The other hostel is in Gerringong, and is located in an old church house at the back of an operating church. It is really homely. It costs about $20 a night, and is on Fern Street, Gerringong (02) 4234 1249.

**What to do there:** Kiama’s premier attraction is the Kiama Blowhole. Yes, that does sound funny. A naturally eroded cave leads in from the ocean and the waves crash into the wall at the end sending plumes of water upwards and into sight! This is an incredible place to be when there is big surf. In the area around the Blowhole there is some great rock-hopping to be had, a top place to go exploring. The surf beaches nearby are really great for body borders/surfers and surfers. Try Bombo, Gerringong or Werri Beach (the far end of Gerringong beach). From Kiama you can access Jamberoo Recreation Park (a fun park with toboggan rides, waterslides and go-carts) by bus. You can also get to the Minnamurra Rainforest (~$8 entry), which is part of the Budderoo National Park and has the spectacular Minnamurra Falls. This is definitely worth a trip.

Kiama Coachlines has a service to and from the Park running out in the morning and back in the afternoon for $8 return. Call them on (02) 4232 1531.
**Jervis Bay: An Off the Beaten Track Gem**

**Description:** Further south of Kiama is one of the most spectacular places in Australia! Jervis bay is located 113km south of Sydney and known for its deserted beaches and white sand. Here you are guaranteed to see pods of dolphins, kangaroos so close that you can stroke them, lorikeets and other birds a plenty.

**Ease of access:** As Jervis Bay is off the beaten track, transport down there is not the best. However, if you are really keen and would like to get a bus of all your mates down there, contact the Club eX team and we’ll be able to help you out!

**Budget:** The best thing about Jervis Bay is that it can be done on a tight budget! The cost of the bus trip down will be around $80 - $100, depending on how long you want to stay. As for accommodation, camping grounds are relatively cheap or you can take the option of sleeping on the beach!

**Rated:** * * * *

**Getting there:** Contact the Club eX team at the Mac Abroad Office

**Where to stay:** There are plenty of camping grounds around Jervis Bay. Contact the Shoalhaven Visitors Centre (**Ph: 1800 024 261**) to find out more details.

**What to do there:** Apart from relaxing on the beautiful beaches and dolphin watching, there are also some great scenic places to explore along the coast line.
Hunter Valley: Wine Tasting & More!

**Description:** “The Hunter” is the oldest commercial wine-producing area in Australia and is definitely worth a visit. The Lower Hunter is centred around the towns of Cessnock and Pokolbin, about 190km north of Sydney. Throughout the area there are over 50 wineries, including well-known producers such as Tyrells, Lindemans, Draytons and McWilliams. All the vineyards are open for “cellar door” wine tasting, so it’s up to you to make the most of the free wine tasting!

**Ease of access:** Getting to “the Hunter” is best done with a tour group of some sort, as although public transport up there is ok, it is not so easy to get around to all the vineyards, as they are scattered all over the rolling hills. There are any number of different tours – from walking to riding bikes. Check it out. Club eX also runs a Hunter Valley Wine tasting event every semester, including champagne breakfast, lunch, bus and wine tasting.

**Budget:** Club eX trip usually costs around $50. This includes bus up and back, entry to four of the most well-known wineries and a guaranteed great day for all! All other tour companies charge at least $100.

**Rated:** * * * *+ (Definitely a must!)

**Getting there:** If you can’t make the Club eX trip, there are several companies that offer day trips to the Hunter Valley from Sydney. Some of these include:
- **The Scenic Wine-tasting Tour (Ph: 0418 232646)** - For around $110 a day, this trip includes a guided tour of three wineries, morning tea and lunch.
- **Wonderbus (Ph: 02 9555 2700)** – The Wonderbus runs day tours of both the Hunter valley and Port Stephens for around $100 a day.

**Where to Stay:** If you have the time it is well worth staying in the Hunter Valley for a couple of days. Contact the **Wine Country Tourist Centre (Ph: 02 4990 4477)** to find out what sort of accommodation is available. For last minute accommodation checkout [www.wotif.com](http://www.wotif.com) or [www.lastminute.com](http://www.lastminute.com).

**What to do there:** Wineries, wine tasting and more wine! As well as some of the most beautiful scenery our state has to offer!
Inside Sydney: Places to eat and drink and a dozen daytrips

Some mandatory places to eat and go drinking
There are a couple of really awesome places to go eating and drinking around the city if you haven’t yet explored them.

Norton St, Leichhardt: Sydney’s ‘Little Italy’ is one of the best known places to eat in Sydney. Famous for its great coffee, gelato, Italian food and legendary atmosphere. Buses to Leichhardt leave from Broadway bus station near Central Station. Call 131 500 for transport details.

Newtown: If you can’t find it at Newtown, chances are you can’t find it. Newtown is renowned for great food at good prices and awesome pubs and if you haven’t been out here to eat or drink then you’ve definitely missed out. Trains run there frequently from Central or Strathfield (with connecting trains to Epping). Turn right out of the station and head up King Street and take your pick. This area is best known for its endless variety and abundance of Thai food. A pub crawl around Newtown is very rewarding too.

Glebe: Once again, there’s tonnes of good places to eat on (or just off) Glebe Point Rd. To get there you can take a bus from Central (on Broadway), or it’s a leisurely 15 minute walk up Broadway to the top of Glebe Point Road. One of the best pubs in Glebe is the (almost literally) world famous ‘Friend in Hand’ with Crab Racing on Wednesday nights and lots of other entertainment other nights of the week. It is on Cowper Rd.

The Rocks: If you haven’t yet been to The Basement (live Jazz and Blues) or the Australian Hotel or any of the pubs beyond Observatory Hill in Millers Point, then you’ve missed out. Pub crawling around The Rocks is a must for anybody wanting a bit of Oz culcha.

Bondi: The tourist mecca has a range of great restaurants and pubs up and down the main street to Bondi Junction as well as along the beachfront (although the whole area is a little pricey). There are markets at the Public School on Sundays. If you can, try and get to the Coogee Bay Hotel in nearby Coogee. It is an incredible complex consisting of several bars and bistros, live music venues and rooms to sleep in, which they probably added to the hotel as an after thought. It is well worth a visit on a Friday or Saturday night. Don’t forget to stop by the ‘Palace’ for a beer too!

Balmain: Just a short bus trip from the city, Darling St, Balmain has some of the best cafes, restaurants and bars in town. After a great Thai meal, head to the Town Hall Hotel (NOT the city!) for a few beers!
Access: bus, or ferry to East Balmain wharf.
As Sydney will be your new home for at least the next 5 months, we urge you to get out there and explore. Sydney has plenty to offer for all types of people. Try some of these:

**Taronga Zoo:** Situated in one of the most spectacular places in Sydney, Taronga Zoo is a great day out. The zoo features a large selection of Australian fauna plus animals from around the world. Accessible by ferry too, which makes for a great day out. The zoo also offers you the possibility of camping out there overnight.
Address: Bradley’s Head Rd, Mosman
Phone: 9969 2777
Open: Daily, 9-5pm

**The Royal Botanic Gardens:** Established in 1816, the Botanic Gardens is the green heart of the city. Takes a stroll through the 30 hectares of grass, rainforest, rose gardens and rare Australian species. Visit the lonely caged Wollemi Pine and check out Sydney’s amazing flying fox population. Good place for an afternoon.
Address: Mrs Macquaries Rd
Open: daily, 7am to sunset.

**The Northern Beaches:** Further north from Manly are some of Sydney’s most beautiful beaches. Newport, Avalon and Long Reef are just a few of the beaches leading to the famous Palm Beach (where Home and Away is filmed), which is definitely worth a look. Why not spend a weekend in Collaroy at the YHA Backpackers Hostel, or have a real adventure out in the bush by staying at the Pittwater YHA, located across Pittwater harbour in the bush.

**Harbour Cruises:** If you missed out on the Orientation Harbour Cruise, make sure that you try to get onto a ferry at some stage. This is a great way to see the Harbour and provides some quality photo opportunities! Most ferries depart from Circular Quay, The Rocks or Darling Harbour.
- Sydney Harbour Ferries (Ph: 13 1500) runs morning (10.00 and 11.15), afternoon (1.00) and evening lights (8.00) cruises from Circular Quay.
- Sydney Showboats runs paddlesteamer cruises day and night from The Rocks (Ph 9552 2772)
- For something different try the Aussie Duck (Ph 13 1007). This has city/harbour tours in amphibious vehicles.

**Climbing the Harbour Bridge:** There are two ways to climb Sydney’s landmark bridge. You can go the official way to the very top by taking a BridgeClimb tour, which costs about $165. Bookings are essential, but it is very pricey.
The best way to climb the bridge, though, is to climb the south-east pylon. From Circular Quay, head up through the Rocks to Cumberland St, then up the stairs onto the Harbour Bridge approach footpaths. As you begin to cross the bridge you reach the big stone pylon, which has a door in one side. Climbing up the stairs to the top will cost you about $6, and the view is almost identical to the view from the top of the bridge itself. Considering it’s $150 cheaper, I call that value-for-money!

**Bondi, Bronte and South Head:** Take the coast walk from Sydney’s famous Bondi beach. Head south and follow the path, passing through Tamarama and Clovelly beaches and finish in Bronte. This is a spectacular walk and is best done at sunset! To the north of Bondi is South Head – former defense department land with great views back towards the city and out towards the Pacific Ocean.

**Quarantine Station:** The Quarantine Station and North Head offer spectacular views and a glimpse of local history. From 1832, ships arriving in Sydney with disease on board were quarantined at this site to protect Sydney from epidemics. The station was closed in 1984 and now offers tours for the public. For a bit of excitement go on a Ghost Tour of the Station. The views from North Head are exceptional and buses run there from Manly.
Address: North Head Scenic Drive  
Phone: 9247 5033  
Open: For tours only

**Manly to the Spit Bridge:** One of the best walks in Sydney. Start at Manly and follow the path past the Ferry Wharf and Aquarium then around the harbour shore. The walk takes in some sensational views, great bushland, and finishes up at the Spit Bridge where buses run frequently back to the city. It’s possible to rent kayaks from the Spit Bridge too, and you can paddle out around middle harbour and see some of Sydney’s most exclusive houses from the water.

**Centennial Park:** If you need to get away from the big city but don’t want to go too far, head to Centennial Park. The park is ideal for roller-blading, horse-riding, cycling, playing ball or any other outdoor recreational activities! Bikes and blades can be hired from Centennial Park Cycles Ph: 9398 5027. Horses can be hired from Centennial Stables Ph: 9360 5650  
Address: main entrances in Oxford St, Woollahra  
Phone: 9339 6699  
Open: daily, sunrise to sunset

**Fox Studios Australia:** If you want to see where the sets of *The Matrix, Mission Impossible and Babe II* were filmed, visit Fox Studios. For the public there is a Backlot Tour, 16-screen cinema complex, a range of shops, bars, and restaurants.
Paddington and Woollahra: Start at Hyde Park and head down Oxford St through Paddington and onto Woollahra. Check out the great shops and the even better nightlife. Local tip - Try Harry’s Café de Wheels near Mrs Macquarie’s Chair for a great Aussie pie!

The ‘alternative’ cinemas: Sydney has a number of cinema’s that play less mainstream films than other city screens. Check out some of these:
- Dendy - Circular Quay, Martin Place, Newtown
- The Chauvel - Paddington Town Hall
- The Valhalla – Glebe
- The Orpheum - Cremorne

Or take a picnic and blanket and try some Outdoor cinema (running in Jan/Feb only):
- Moonlight Cinema- Centennial Park
- Open Air Cinema- Botanic Gardens

The Bicentennial Park and Sydney Olympic site: Sydney’s major sporting venue, the grounds of the 2000 Olympic Games hosts numerous sporting and special events. They play AFL (a sport you absolutely must see while you’re in Australia), cricket, soccer, rugby union and rugby league. Plenty of Olympic memorabilia and the nice Bicentennial Park nearby, where you can take a picnic.

Lane Cove: If you’re living close to Uni and want to get a bit of a taste of Australia, check out the Lane Cove National Park. From the University gym, continue up the hill and out onto Waterloo Road. Follow the footpath around the back of the Trafalgar shopping center and then follow the signs for the cycleway. After you pass under the M2 motorway, you’re into the National Park – head down the hill (watching out for cyclists) to Brown’s Waterhole – then follow the signs for the Great North Walk (a 250km hiking trail from Sydney to Newcastle). This will lead you along through some nice bits of bushland.

Chinatown: One of the best places to find a good Chinese Yum Cha, do some cheap shopping and have a great cultural experience. If you’re heading down to Darling Harbour for a night out, why not stop by the night markets on your way.

Markets: For a fun day out, try and visit one of the inner-city weekend markets. Here you can buy groovy new and second-hand goods, alternative foods and enjoy a relaxed atmosphere. Some of the best include:
- Glebe Markets - On Saturday at Glebe Public School
- Paddington Markets - On Saturday
- Balmain Markets - On Saturday
- Bondi Markets- On Saturday
- The Rocks Market - On the Weekend
- Sydney’s Paddy’s Markets - Thursday – Sunday
Kur-ring-gai Chase National Park: If you’ve got a bit of a taste for the outdoors then Kur-ring-gai Chase National Park is the perfect place to start. There are fantastic bushwalks along the Great North Walk (from Cowan to Brooklyn via the beautiful Jerusalem Bay), or along the Mt Kur-ring-gai – Berowra walking track. Both these walks are easily accessed by train from Epping railway station and will give you a great little taste of the bush around Sydney. Information about the walks is readily available online (search for ‘Bushwalks in Kurringgai Chase National Park’) or from the University Bushwalking Club.

The Parting Word

Whatever you do guys and gals, get out there and do it properly. Join clubs and societies and meet as many Australians as you can. Australia is a big place and you won’t be able to do it all – so just do as much as you can as best you can. Starting in your own backyard, ie. Sydney, is a great way to go. We all look forward to seeing you out there.

Stay safe.
Your mates at Club eX