

Canberra

Eguide

Canberra has been the capital of Australia since parliament moved here in 1927. It is essentially an artificial city, created because both Sydney and Melbourne aspired to the position of national capital, so the logical compromise was to build somewhere new between the two.

The Australian Capital Territory came into being on 1st January 1911, and an international competition was held for the design of the capital itself. An American from Chicago, Walter Burley Griffin was declared the winner. Canberra was named on 12th March 1913 and construction began soon after.

You will soon find that Mr. Burley Griffin was not much of a straight lines man. Many of the roads in Canberra are circular or semi-circular.

He also believed in grand sweeping avenues and using plenty of space, since it was readily available. This means that it is not easy to walk from one place to another in Canberra. Be prepared to use buses, or expend a lot of energy.

Burley Griffin's basic plan remains at the heart of Canberra. He designed a triangle of avenues linking three circles, Vernon Circle in the commercial heart of the city, Capital Hill, which is the centre of the nation's government, and Russell, lying to the east.

In the centre of these was to be a lake, with important public buildings to its south, so that the sun, shining from the north, would strike them and cause them to be reflected in the lake.



The damming of the Molonglo River in 1964 brought this dream to fruition and Lake Burley Griffin was formed. Burley Griffin's Canberra was designed for a population of 25,000. Now the city accommodates 330,000 and it has spread out from its main centre to include four other major conurbations. These are Woden to the south, Tuggeranong even further south, Belconnen to the north and Queanbeyan to the east. Queanbeyan, however, does not lie within the Australian Capital Territory, but is a part of New South Wales.

Lake Burley Griffin divides central Canberra, with the city centre, called the "Civic", on the north side and the parliamentary and embassy area on the south side. National institutions are spread on both the North and South side of the Lake. Many people living in Canberra are employed by the Australian Government or service the Government.

Canberra Attractions

Aboriginal Embassy

In front of Old Parliament House, the Aboriginal Embassy is still standing, although constantly threatened with demolition. It is a temporary structure erected some years ago, in this most conspicuous of positions, by the aboriginal communities of Australia to emphasise and publicise their complaint that they had no say in the government of their own country.

Australian National Botanic Gardens

The Australian National Botanic Gardens are over two kilometres to the west of the city centre. They contain the best collection of Australian flora in the world. Other highlights are the rainforest gully with a treetop walkway; rock garden; guided tours; and a cafe, bookshop and visitor centre. *Clunies Ross Street, Black Mountain (02 6250 9450).*

Australian Federal Police Museum

This museum displays the history of the Federal Police Force. There are numerous historical displays of uniforms and police memorabilia and it is located in the Police Services and Training Centre. *Unwin Place, Westin (02 6287 0618).*

Australian Institute of Sport

This famous sporting institute opened in 1981 and since then has trained most of Australia's greatest athletes across a variety of sports. There are some fun and interesting tours conducted here, with well known members of the Institute conducting many of them.

A highlight is the interactive Sportex museum, where you can test your fitness levels against our top Olympians. Access to the training venues is also available. *Leverrier Crescent, Bruce (02 6214 1444).*



Blundell's Cottage

This six room sandstone cottage was built before Canberra existed in 1860, it was moved to this site and restored in 1964. A hands-on historic home where you can touch the artefacts. Parkes Way.

Canberra Railway Museum

Located near the Canberra Railway station, this museum has plenty of beautifully restored old and newer engines. The exhibits include the engine, built in 1878, which hauled the first train into Canberra on 25th May 1914. There are tours available. *Queanbeyan Railway Station, Henderson Road, Queanbeyan (02 6284 2790).*



Australian War Memorial

The Australian War Memorial is on the northern side of Lake Burley Griffin and is a moving display which is well worth visiting. It has been rated one of the best war museums in the world. The War Memorial is about three kilometres from the city centre. *Anzac Parade (02 6243 4211).*

Cockington Green Gardens

The world in miniature at Cockington Green Gardens with an old English village and other countries displayed in miniature.

Gardens and lawns surround the displays and you can travel around on the mini steam train.

Deep Space Communication Complex

This information centre on space is still active tracking results from Mars Pathfinder, Voyager 1 and 2 and many other space explorations, it also provides a link with NASA spacecraft. Located 39km southwest of Canberra, it is a must for people interested in astronomy and space missions. *Tidbinbilla (02 6201 7880)*.

Duntroon House

Home to the first settler along the Molonglo River, it is now part of the Royal Military College. Parts of this historic house date back to the 1830's. *Jubilee Avenue*.

Government House

The official residence of the Governor General but closed to the public except for open days but can be seen from the hill off the Scrivener Dam Road.

High Court of Australia

The building itself was the winner of a design competition and was opened by the Queen in 1980. This is the highest court in Australia and its main feature is its seven story public hall. *King Edward Terrace, The National Triangle (02 6270 6811)*.

National Archives of Australia

The National Archives of Australia are kept in the Old Post Office in Queen Victoria Terrace, close to Old Parliament House.

The archives are available to those carrying out research or trying to trace family trees, but there are also exhibitions of interesting documents.

The building was constructed in 1927, at the same time as Old Parliament House. *Queen Victoria Terrace, Parkes (02 6212 3600)*.



Namadgi National Park

This magnificent stretch of alpine wilderness is located near Tharwa and covers over 45% of the ACT. This park is ideal for scenic drives, bushwalking and flora and fauna watching. An informative visitor's centre is located here and can be found 30kms from Canberra. *Nass/Boboyan road, Tharwa (02 6207 2900)*.

National Gallery of Australia

The National Gallery of Australia lies on the south shore of Lake Burley Griffin and is located in The National Triangle. The National Gallery displays Australia's largest collection of Australian art, which includes aboriginal artists, as well as famous Australian artists Sidney Nolan, Arthur Boyd, Arthur Streeton, Tom Roberts and many more. Another highlight is the sculpture garden around the gallery that displays 24 sculptures. *Parkes Place (02 6271 2502)*.

National Carillon

The National Carillon, a bicentennial gift from Britain, stands on Aspen Island in Lake Burley Griffin. It is a three column bell tower comprising 53 bells and chimes every quarter of an hour. *Aspen Island*.

National Dinosaur Museum

There are over three hundred exhibits including ten full-size replica skeletons of dinosaurs in this museum. Located 11kms North of Canberra. *Gold Creek Road (02 6230 2655)*.

National Capital Exhibition

The National Capital Exhibition is at Regatta Point, walking distance from the city centre, right beside Lake Burley Griffin and near the Captain Cook Water Jet. It tells the story of Canberra from the start of aboriginal times up until the present. *Regatta Point, Commonwealth Park, Parkes (02 6257 1068)*.



National Film and Sound Archive

This is a collection of radio, television and film archives housed in an impressive art deco building in McCoy Circuit, next to the Australian National University and walking distance from the city centre. *McCoy Circuit (02 6248 2000)*.

National Library

The National Library is near Lake Burley Griffin, outside the library is a Henry Moore statue.

National Museum of Australia

The National Museum of Australia uses new technology to display themes both old and new.

This innovative museum has a focus on all things Australian with a range of exciting displays and themed galleries. A full day's entertainment can be had here. *Lennox Crossing (1800 026 132).*



National Portrait Gallery

The National Portrait Gallery is housed in Old Parliament House and was once the seat of the Australian government between 1927 and 1988.

The National Portrait Gallery is a visual who's who of some of Australia's notable political figures and other famous Australians. *King George Terrace (02 6270 8222).*

Prime Minister's Lodge

Closed to the public (except some open days) but the garden can be seen from behind the wall.



National Zoo and aquarium

This is a fun zoo for all ages with a mix of terrestrial and aquatic species. Not only is it the only mixed zoo and aquarium in Australia but, it also houses the largest collection of big cats. There are plenty of native animals on display as well as some favourite overseas visitors. *Scrivener Dam, Yarralumla (02 6287 8400).*

Old Parliament House

Old Parliament House is much more traditional than its more modern replacement, but still most imposing. Burley Griffin imagined that this was just going to be a temporary building however, Parliament sat here for 61 years, from 1927 until 1988. It now houses the National portrait Gallery and daily tours are available. *King George Terrace (02 6273 5130).*

Parliament House

The most important sight in Canberra is Parliament House, sitting atop Capital Hill and ruling the nation. It was opened in 1988 and now the 81-metre flagpole which surmounts it can be seen from almost any place in the city. Parliament House is three kilometres from the city centre and guided tours are conducted when Parliament is not sitting. *Capital Hill (02 6277 4889).*

Telstra Tower

The Telstra Tower is known for the view it gives of Canberra. It is 195 metres high and built on the top of Black Mountain, five kilometres from the city centre.

The main purpose of the tower, of course, is its telecommunications functions, but it also has a public viewing gallery and an exhibition showing the history of telecommunications in Australia.

Royal Australian Mint

If you want to see how to make money then, this is the place to go. You can see how the money is produced and learn the history of Australian currency.

There is a coin collection housed in the mint and you can even make your own coins here. *Denison Street, Deakin (02 6202 6891).*



Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

This rural heaven is located about 40 minutes drive west of Canberra. You can see lots of native birds and animals in their natural environment.

There are plenty of hiking trails, with some adventurous ones to the mountaintops. *Paddys River Road, Tidbinbilla (02 6205 1233).*

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PO Box 1131
Noosaville DC
Queensland 4566
Australia