

Guide to

Living and Exploring in Gold Coast



Abstract

The “Guide to Living and Exploring in Gold Coast” provides a comprehensive overview for both residents and visitors seeking to experience the best of this vibrant coastal city. Covering essential aspects of life in Gold Coast, the guide highlights top attractions, popular beaches, iconic landmarks, and entertainment hubs. It explores the best suburbs for families, students, and professionals, while offering insights into dining, shopping, and cultural experiences. Outdoor enthusiasts will find practical advice on surfing, hiking, water sports, and adventure activities.

Additionally, the guide provides useful tips for navigating the city safely and efficiently, making it an indispensable resource for newcomers and tourists alike who want to live, explore, and thrive in the unique environment of Gold Coast.

Getting Started

Gold Coast is a vibrant city offering a mix of stunning beaches, bustling urban life, and outdoor adventures. To get started, newcomers and visitors should first familiarize themselves with the city's layout and key suburbs. Identify the areas that suit your lifestyle—whether you're looking for family-friendly neighborhoods, student accommodations, or high-demand professional hubs. Next, explore the essential services such as public transport, healthcare, and local markets.

Planning your daily commute, understanding local safety norms, and researching entertainment and dining options will make your transition smoother. Finally, embrace Gold Coast's outdoor lifestyle by discovering beaches, parks, and recreational activities. This foundation will help you navigate, enjoy, and thrive in the city with confidence.

Introduction To Gold Coast

The Gold Coast is Australia's sixth largest city. It is home to over 635,000 people. We are a city known for our lifestyle and diversity, with almost one in three residents born overseas. The city boasts close to one million visitors each year from countries all over the world. With a vibrant arts and culture scene, a beautiful natural environment and world-class tourism attractions, we also have a proud history and a heritage to preserve and protect for future generations.

Our Indigenous locals are descendants of the traditional Aboriginal people of the region. Some have moved to the Gold Coast from other regions around Australia. We collaborate with our local Indigenous community to document their history and culture and share it with everyone. We have strong ties with sister cities around the world and continue to grow the diversity and strength of our international connections. This creates real business opportunities in trade and investment in a range of industries.

At the same time, our Digital City Program is transforming how we live, connect, and grow, with the view of the Gold Coast soon being one of Australia's leading digital cities.

So, welcome to this wonderful city — we are sure you'll enjoy every aspect that the Gold Coast has to offer.

1. Overview of Gold Coast



The Gold Coast is a major coastal city in Queensland, Australia, renowned for its stunning beaches, subtropical climate, and vibrant lifestyle. As Australia's sixth-largest city, it is home to over 635,000 residents, nearly one-third of whom were born overseas. This makes the Gold Coast a culturally diverse and multicultural city, welcoming people from all around the world. Its combination of natural beauty, modern infrastructure, and lively cultural scene makes it a highly attractive place for both tourists and residents.

2. Geography and Climate

The Gold Coast spans approximately 1,402 square kilometers, stretching along 57 kilometers of coastline. The city features a unique mix of urban development, hinterland regions, and natural landscapes. Key natural attractions include the Gold Coast beaches, the hinterland rainforest areas, and the 600 km of canals that run through residential areas.

The climate is subtropical, which means warm winters and hot, humid summers. This climate makes the Gold Coast an ideal location for beach activities, water sports, and outdoor recreation year-round. The subtropical environment also contributes to the lush landscapes, making it one of the most picturesque cities in Australia.

3. History and Development

The history of the Gold Coast goes back over 23,000 years, with Indigenous Australians being the original inhabitants. The land was rich in resources and was integral to the cultural practices and survival of Aboriginal communities.

European settlement began in the early 19th century. Initially, the area was a quiet coastal region with small settlements and farming communities. By the mid-20th century, the Gold Coast underwent significant transformation into a tourist destination, with the construction of hotels, resorts, and entertainment facilities. In 1959, the South Coast Town Council officially adopted the name “Gold Coast,” and within a year, the area was proclaimed a city.

4. Economy and Industry

Tourism is the primary driver of the Gold Coast economy, attracting around 10 million visitors annually. The city offers a variety of attractions, including pristine beaches, theme parks, nature reserves, and luxury resorts with a total of 65,000 beds available for accommodation.

Beyond tourism, the Gold Coast has a diverse economy. Key industries include:

- Healthcare and education – Providing services and jobs to a growing population.
- Construction and real estate – Supporting urban growth and infrastructure projects.
- Financial services and business – Contributing to the city’s economic stability.
- Manufacturing and innovation sectors – Driving new investment and employment opportunities

This diverse economic base ensures long-term growth and stability for residents and investors alike.

5. Culture and Lifestyle

The Gold Coast is renowned for its vibrant lifestyle and strong cultural identity. With a significant proportion of residents born overseas, the city embraces multiculturalism and celebrates a variety of cultural events, festivals, and cuisines.

The arts scene is thriving, with galleries, museums, theaters, and public art displays reflecting the city’s creativity and diversity. The natural environment is a significant part of Gold Coast life, offering residents and tourists opportunities for surfing, hiking, wildlife spotting, and beach activities. The city also has a rich heritage that is carefully preserved and showcased through historical sites, museums, and cultural programs

6. Living in Gold Coast

Gold Coast offers a high quality of life, with modern infrastructure, excellent schools, healthcare facilities, and recreational options. Popular suburbs provide options for families, students, and professionals, catering to diverse lifestyles and budgets. Public transport, road networks, and proximity to airports make the city convenient for both daily commuting and international travel. Residents enjoy a lifestyle that combines urban convenience with the beauty of nature. The coastal lifestyle, combined with cultural, entertainment, and outdoor activities, makes Gold Coast one of the most sought-after places to live in Australia.

The Gold Coast is a dynamic, multicultural, and scenic city that attracts millions of visitors each year while providing a high standard of living for residents. From its stunning beaches and natural landscapes to its diverse economy, rich history, and vibrant cultural life, the city offers something for everyone. Whether you are visiting or planning to settle here, the Gold Coast

promises a unique and fulfilling experience, blending the excitement of urban living with the tranquility of coastal life.

What Are The Top Tourist Attractions?

The Gold Coast isn't just a destination – it's a vibe. A place where iconic beaches, ancient rainforests, adrenaline-pumping theme parks, and a buzzing dining scene collide to create the ultimate holiday playground. Whether you're chasing waves, chasing thrills, or just chasing that next incredible meal, the Gold Coast has you covered. From the sunrise at Burleigh to fishing at Main Beach, soaking up the golden sands of Surfers Paradise to surfing alongside the pros at Coolangatta, this iconic coastline has it all.

Things to see and do on the Gold Coast



The Gold Coast has been luring sunseekers for decades, and with sunshine almost all year round, it's no surprise that life here happens outdoors.

Take to the water with kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding, surfing, or jet skiing, or try jetpack riding if you're feeling brave. Or, if you'd rather keep things cruisy, enjoy a beachside picnic, some retail therapy, or get up close with Aussie wildlife at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary. Love a good thrill? The Gold Coast delivers in spades with world-class theme parks. Whether you're conquering the highest drop, meeting a furry friend, or splashing your way through a water wonderland, there's something for every adventure level.

The Gold Coast is also a hotspot for events. Think music festivals, endurance races, and world-class sports competitions. Swell Sculpture Festival transforms the beaches into open-air galleries while major surfing comps hit legendary breaks like Snapper Rocks and Coolangatta. Not into waves? The Supercars Gold Coast 500 takes over the streets, and the Magic Millions horse race brings glitz and glamour to Surfers Paradise.

For a nature reset, head inland to the lush Gold Coast Hinterland. Think charming wineries, misty rainforests, and waterfall-dotted bushwalks at Springbrook, Lamington, and Main Range National Parks.

The Gold Coast isn't just about surf and sand - it's rich in stories, too. Step into the past at Jelluralg Aboriginal Cultural Centre, where you can join a guided tour, see traditional artwork, and hear Dreamtime stories of Burleigh Headland (Jelluralg, the 'Dreaming Mountain'). Need more advice? Chat with a friendly local at a Visitor Information Centre to uncover the best Gold Coast attractions.

Where to eat and drink

Worked up an appetite? You're in the right place. The Gold Coast has become a foodie's dream, with everything from fine dining to the best night market and fresh-off-the-boat seafood. Rooftop bars, boutique breweries, and iconic surf clubs all add to the vibrant mix.

For the early risers, check out why breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Looking for somewhere that the whole family can enjoy? These Gold Coast's best kid friendly cafes need to be added to your list.

Whether you're in Broadbeach, Burleigh Heads, or Surfers Paradise, you're never far from your next amazing meal.

What to know before you go

Where is the Gold Coast?

The Gold Coast is tucked into the south-east corner of Queensland, Australia, just over an hour's drive (80 km) south of Brisbane. It hugs the Pacific Ocean, with famous beaches on one side and lush hinterland on the other.

What airport do I fly into to visit the Gold Coast?

Fly into Gold Coast Airport (OOL) at Coolangatta, just a 30-minute drive from Surfers Paradise. Alternatively, you can fly into Brisbane Airport and drive or catch the train down.

How to get around the Gold Coast?

Getting around is a breeze thanks to the G:link light rail (which runs from Helensvale to Broadbeach), a reliable bus network, plus taxis, rideshares, and plenty of bike paths along the beach.

To get here from Brisbane you can:

- Drive: Just over an hour via the M1.
- Catch the train: From Brisbane Airport or Central Station, ride the train to Helensvale then hop on the G:link tram to head towards Surfers Paradise and beyond.

- Bus: Various coach and shuttle services run from Brisbane to the Gold Coast, including direct airport transfers.

If you're planning day trips into the hinterland or exploring beyond, hiring a car can be handy.

What's the climate of the Gold Coast?

The Gold Coast enjoys a subtropical climate – think sunny skies, warm days, and mild winters.

- Summer (Dec–Feb): 21–28°C, hot and humid with the highest rainfall.
- Autumn (Mar–May): 17–26°C, less humidity and sunny days.
- Winter (Jun–Aug): 11–21°C, dry, mild and perfect for outdoor adventures.
- Spring (Sep–Nov): 16–26°C, sunny, breezy and all-round beautiful.



When is the best time to visit?

Anytime! The Gold Coast shines all year, but summer and school holidays are peak times. For fewer crowds, visit in spring or autumn. From July to October, you can even spot humpback whales just offshore.

Time your trip for one of the Gold Coast's epic events like Magic Millions Carnival, Blues on Broadbeach, BLEACH Festival or Pacific Airshow. Here's what's on.

What are the best beaches on the Gold Coast?

The Gold Coast is all about the beaches. You've got the iconic buzz of Surfers Paradise, family-fave Tallebudgera Creek, and quieter southern stunners like Kirra and Currumbin. Check out our guide to the Gold Coast's best beaches to find your perfect patch of sand. Most are lifeguard patrolled, please swim between the red and yellow flags.

There's loads of dog-friendly beaches too.

Where should I stay on the Gold Coast?

Whether it's beachfront luxury, cosy holiday homes, budget-friendly backpackers or caravan parks, the Gold Coast has a bed for every budget. In the hinterland, you've got everything from camping and glamping to luxury yoga retreats or rainforest cottages. Get started:

- The best of the best
- Boutique stays
- Budget Gold Coast accommodation
- Apartments
- Family-friendly accommodation
- Where to stay in the Hinterland

What are the best day trips from the Gold Coast?

When you're ready to roam, there's some epic escapes nearby.

- Lamington National Park: World Heritage rainforests and scenic hikes
- Scenic Rim: Mountains, wineries and farm gates
- Mount Tamborine: Waterfalls, skywalks and artisan shops
- South Stradbroke Island: A wild and peaceful offshore adventure

How to get to the Gold Coast

Travelling to the Gold Coast is as smooth as riding that perfect wave. It's just an hour's drive south of Brisbane via the M1, with regular trains and buses making the trip easy.

Gold Coast Airport (Coolangatta) connects the city to major domestic and international destinations. It's only 35 km from Southport, 25 km from Surfers Paradise, and 17 km from Burleigh Heads. Once you land, public transport, rideshares, and transfers are all on hand to whisk you to the action.

Best Suburb To Live In Gold Coast

The Gold Coast is one of Australia's most sought-after cities for both families and professionals due to its stunning beaches, vibrant lifestyle, excellent infrastructure, and scenic surroundings. Choosing the right suburb can make a significant difference in lifestyle, convenience, and property investment. Here are some of the best suburbs to live in Gold Coast:

1. Robina

Robina is a master-planned community located in the central Gold Coast area. Known for its modern infrastructure, Robina offers excellent schools, shopping centers like Robina Town Centre, and a variety of parks and recreational spaces. It's also a hub for employment and business, making it ideal for professionals and families alike. With well-planned streets, easy access to public transport, and proximity to the M1 motorway, Robina provides a balanced lifestyle with convenience and comfort.

Robina, located in the heart of the Gold Coast, is a modern and thriving suburb known for its Robina Town Centre, Robina Golf Club, and excellent schools and parks. The suburb has quickly become a preferred choice for families, professionals, and retirees seeking convenience and a vibrant lifestyle. In 2021, Robina's population was approximately 26,000 people, featuring a mix of young professionals, families with school-aged children, and retirees. The residential property market is strong, with the average price for a three-bedroom house around \$780,000, while the average rent is \$600 per week.

To know more about this suburb, must check this out:
<https://www.bondcleaninggoldcoast.com.au/robina/>



2. Southport

Southport is often considered the CBD of Gold Coast, offering a mix of residential, commercial, and cultural amenities. It's popular among professionals who work locally or commute to Brisbane. Southport features good schools, shopping facilities, and healthcare services, as well as recreational options like Broadwater Parklands. The suburb is also well-connected via public transport and roads, making it a prime location for city access with a coastal lifestyle.

3. Burleigh Heads

Burleigh Heads is a beachside suburb known for its surfing culture, scenic beaches, and relaxed atmosphere. Ideal for families, retirees, and young professionals seeking a coastal lifestyle, Burleigh Heads also offers boutique shops, cafes, and a vibrant dining scene. The suburb is famous for its national park and walking trails, allowing residents to enjoy nature without leaving the city. It combines beach living with a strong community feel, making it one of the most desirable suburbs on the Gold Coast.

4. Broadbeach

Broadbeach is another highly sought-after suburb, offering a mix of luxury apartments, entertainment, and leisure options. It is close to major attractions like Pacific Fair Shopping Centre and the Star Casino, and is also known for its beautiful beach and family-friendly parks. Broadbeach's well-developed public transport network and proximity to Surfers Paradise make it a popular choice for both locals and newcomers who want a cosmopolitan yet coastal lifestyle.

Gold Coast offers a variety of suburbs, each with its unique lifestyle, amenities, and advantages. Suburbs like Robina, Southport, Burleigh Heads, and Broadbeach cater to different preferences, whether you're looking for a family-friendly environment, a professional hub, or a relaxed coastal lifestyle. Robina stands out for its modern facilities and strategic location, making it one of the most balanced and convenient suburbs on the Gold Coast. Choosing the right suburb depends on personal priorities, such as proximity to work, schools, beaches, and recreational opportunities.

Outdoor And Adventures In Gold Coast

The Gold Coast, located in Queensland, Australia, is globally renowned not only for its stunning beaches and urban lifestyle but also for its abundance of outdoor and adventure opportunities. From adrenaline-pumping activities to tranquil nature escapes, the city offers experiences that cater to thrill-seekers, families, and nature enthusiasts alike. The diverse landscape of the Gold Coast, which includes beaches, hinterlands, rainforests, rivers, and mountains, makes it a haven for outdoor recreation.

1. Surfing and Water Sports

The Gold Coast is famously known as the surfing capital of Australia. Iconic beaches such as Surfers Paradise, Burleigh Heads, and Coolangatta attract surfers from around the world. Beginners can enroll in surf schools to learn basic techniques, while experienced surfers can challenge themselves in waves at Snapper Rocks or Kirra Beach.

Beyond surfing, the Gold Coast offers a variety of water sports, including jet skiing, paddleboarding, kayaking, and kite surfing. The calm waterways of the canals and rivers, like the Coomera and Nerang Rivers, provide safe areas for families and beginners to enjoy water-based adventures.

2. Hinterland Adventures

The Gold Coast Hinterland offers a complete contrast to the coastal environment, with lush rainforests, waterfalls, and mountain ranges. Popular destinations like Springbrook National Park, Lamington National Park, and Tamborine Mountain are perfect for hiking, birdwatching, and exploring ancient forests.

Visitors can experience waterfall hikes, canopy walks, and eco-tours that showcase the region's rich flora and fauna. The hinterland is also popular for mountain biking, rock climbing, and scenic drives, making it ideal for both adrenaline seekers and nature lovers.

3. Theme Parks and Adventure Attractions

The Gold Coast is home to some of Australia's most famous theme parks, offering outdoor adventure combined with entertainment. These include:

- Dreamworld – Roller coasters, wildlife experiences, and thrill rides.
- Warner Bros. Movie World – Themed rides, shows, and attractions for all ages.
- Sea World – Marine life adventures, water rides, and interactive experiences.
- Wet'n'Wild – A premier water park with slides, wave pools, and adventure rides.

These parks provide exciting outdoor experiences for families, groups, and tourists seeking both adventure and leisure.

4. Nature and Wildlife Experiences

For those who prefer a more tranquil outdoor experience, the Gold Coast has nature reserves and wildlife sanctuaries that offer immersion in Australia's unique ecosystem. Visitors can explore:

- Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary – Interact with koalas, kangaroos, and exotic birds.
- Springbrook National Park – Rainforest walks, waterfalls, and glowworm caves.
- Burleigh Head National Park – Coastal walking trails with spectacular views and local wildlife spotting.

These areas are perfect for hiking, photography, and birdwatching, allowing visitors to connect with nature in a safe and scenic environment.



5. Adventure Sports and Extreme Activities

The Gold Coast also caters to adventure enthusiasts looking for extreme outdoor activities.

Options include:

- Skydiving over the coastline – An unforgettable aerial view of the beaches and hinterland.
- Paragliding and hang gliding – Popular around Springbrook and Tamborine Mountain.
- Mountain biking and off-road trails – Extensive tracks in the hinterland for varying skill levels.
- Jet boating and parasailing – Exciting ways to enjoy the waterways.
- These activities attract thrill-seekers and provide unique perspectives of the city's natural and urban landscapes.

6. Coastal Walks and Scenic Trails

The Gold Coast is rich in scenic coastal and hinterland trails. Walking or cycling along the Gold Coast Oceanway, which stretches over 35 kilometers along the coastline, allows visitors to enjoy beaches, parks, and lookout points. Hinterland trails, such as the Tamborine Rainforest Skywalk, provide elevated views of lush rainforests, waterfalls, and wildlife habitats.

These trails are suitable for families, fitness enthusiasts, and tourists seeking a combination of exercise, relaxation, and scenic beauty.

Top Tips for Residents and Tourists

Summer is the high season for tourism as millions of vacationers head for beaches, historical sites and museums all over the world. Traveling is an amazing thing: an opportunity to learn new things, see new places and meet new people. However, as with most amazing things there are drawbacks. We have to leave our habitual routines and comfort zones, air travel can be stressful – particularly with children – and there's quite a lot of crime targeting specifically tourists and foreign visitors.

I can boast being rather a seasoned traveler. I average some 100 flights a year and know quite a bit about the perks and perils of life on the go. We live in an increasingly computerized world and our digital footprint has been rapidly growing over the last decade or two. The result is that as many as 18% of the travelers we surveyed have had problems caused by cybercrime while abroad. This is three times more than the number of who suffered physical crimes against them while away from home. And that's why I want to share some digital-security tips for tourists and travelers going abroad:

Tip No. 1: Take an extra debit card with a low balance and some local cash with you

When travelling abroad you often simply can't be completely sure it's safe to use your regular credit or debit card. A waiter in a restaurant in a distant land may carry it away with him (although this is increasingly rare) to scan it to pay your bill, or inserts it into a suspicious-looking point-of-sale (POS) device. Criminals attach bank card skimmers to ATMs or POS devices and they're not easy to spot. We know of cases where criminals turn ATMs themselves into skimmers: they infect the cash machines and make them collect the bank credentials of the customers who use them. And it's impossible to distinguish an infected ATM from a clean one.

I suggest carrying an extra debit card with you with just a small amount of funds available on it, and to use only it in any situation where your card is more likely to be compromised than usual. Small shops, restaurants, an obscure ATM at night... And I also prefer carrying a small amount of local cash with me as often you find bank cards simply aren't accepted in a lot of places.

Tip No. 2: Use a VPN for unknown Wi-Fi networks

Let's admit it: many of us use unprotected Wi-Fi networks when we travel. Doing so is now second nature to most of us, and anyway sometimes there's no other choice. But are you aware that it's easy for cybercriminals to sniff your traffic if you're using an insecure network with weak encryption or without it? The first thing I do when I get online on such a network is connect to my company's virtual private network (VPN), which encrypts all my online communications.

Tip No. 3: Be VERY cautious with hotel business center computers

I'd much prefer to recommend never using public computers, but I understand that sometimes they're impossible to avoid. If you have to print something out really urgently, what else are you going to do? The problem is that using public computers can easily go horribly wrong.



The first issue is that people often don't realize what sort of traces (passwords saved, accounts logged in, etc. to name the most obvious) they leave. I've heard a story of someone finding documents marked 'TOP SECRET' in the 'Downloads' folder on a public computer in a hotel somewhere in the Middle East! If those were real documents, clearly someone with very poor computer security hygiene standards had left them there. Or maybe it was a cunning ploy to make people copy the files – which contained some advanced and invisible malware? We'll never know. Incidentally, the guy who told me the story said he immediately became paranoid and really wanted to 'un-see' the files.

The second issue is that hotel computers may be already infected. There have been reports of criminals installing keylogging malware in several American hotel networks to collect guests' credentials and steal their valuable data.

In short: using public computers for anything besides reading the news or printing something not too confidential is a bad idea.

Tip No. 4: Protect your devices with passwords and backup before you leave

While traveling people sometimes lose their stuff – including their smartphones, tablets and laptops. Often the data stored on a lost device is more valuable than the device itself. It's possible to minimize the damage by backing up all your data, encrypting the hard drive, and

using a strong password. I also recommend using anti-theft apps that can help locate the device, or at least wipe (remotely) all the data on it if it's lost for good.

Tip No. 5: Don't overshare

Many people share large troves of personal data on social networks. I strongly advise against doing so. Various scammers can use this data to hack into personal accounts and steal data or money from bank accounts. And posting vacation photos while still on vacation is asking for trouble: potential burglars see you're thousands of miles away and simply break into your home. So those are my top-five tips for when traveling abroad. (They're in addition to the basic all-round guidelines, like keeping all software up to date, using a good security solution, and not following suspicious links or opening dubious attachments.) They're all simple and easy to follow, so there's really no excuse! However, just remember: there's no such thing as absolute security, either online or offline. So at least observing basic computer security hygiene – especially while on holiday when the risks can be greater and your vigilance lower – is the bare minimum we should all aim for to minimize the risks. Be smart. And don't be an easy target for cybercriminals.

Bottom Line

The Gold Coast is a dynamic and diverse city that offers something for everyone—from sun-soaked beaches and thrilling outdoor adventures to vibrant cultural experiences and family-friendly suburbs. Whether you are a new resident, a long-term local, or a visitor, the city provides opportunities to live, explore, and thrive in a unique coastal environment. Its combination of modern infrastructure, natural beauty, recreational activities, and multicultural lifestyle makes it one of Australia's most appealing destinations.

By understanding the city's neighborhoods, attractions, and outdoor adventures, you can fully embrace everything the Gold Coast has to offer and create memorable experiences while enjoying a high quality of life.

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