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CAR ROAD TRIP · 10 DAYS FROM MELBOURNE

Melbourne to Sydney by car: 10 days along the coast

Take the coastal route through Phillip Island, Wilsons Promontory and the NSW South Coast. This guide uses rooms, motels and built accommodation at Tidal River for a car-based trip.

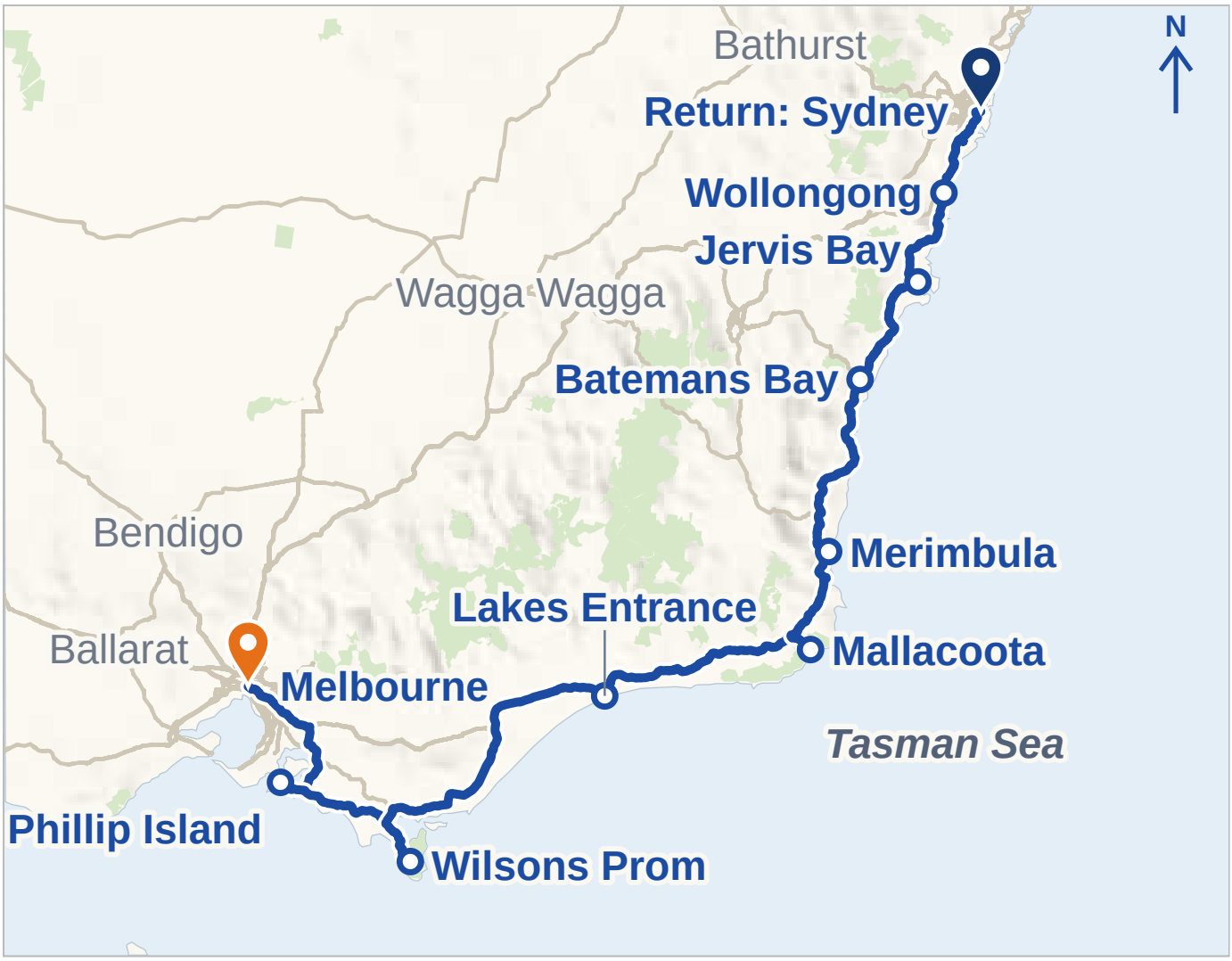
DISTANCE	DAYS	ROUTE	DRIVING TIME
About 1,365 km	10 days, 9 drives	One way, Melbourne to Sydney	About 20 h by car

LONGEST DRIVE	VEHICLE
290 km, Wilsons Prom to Lakes Entrance	Car

This trip crosses the Country of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, Bunurong, Gunaikurnai, Bidawel, Yuin, Dharawal, Gadigal and other First Nations peoples. Traditional Custodians



Squeaky Beach, Wilsons Promontory, day 3 · Illustrative image



Planning overview, not navigation. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors · coastline Natural Earth · relief Terrain Tiles (Geoscience Australia, SRTM).

BEFORE YOU BOOK

Hiring a car for this trip

Compare car hire in Melbourne for your dates and choose the actual airport or city branch you want. Book every driver and check the documents needed at pick-up, card and bond requirements, including the security deposit. Choose enough luggage space for your group; you will be carrying bags between accommodation stops.

Check the rental company's road restrictions for the route and any optional detours. The map is a planning guide, not permission to use a road. Driving figures are for the mapped routes, before sightseeing stops, breaks, traffic and local drives to your accommodation.

Book a one-way hire with the correct return city and branch. Check the total, any one-way fee and interstate or ferry conditions in your quote before committing to accommodation.

WHERE TO STAY

Book rooms for your overnight stops

The places below are examples to help you plan the route, not reserved rooms. Check availability, minimum stays, cancellation terms, parking and check-in times for your dates. Book a room, apartment or cabin with the facilities you need. A campsite alone does not provide accommodation for this car itinerary.

The map links overnight towns or route bases, rather than individual hotel driveways. Local access and sightseeing detours add distance and time. If you change the overnight town, recalculate the route and the next day's drive.

Picking up your car in Melbourne

For a city stay first, you can collect from a city branch when you start driving. If you collect at the airport, check whether your booked rental company uses an airport desk or a shuttle to an off-airport branch. See Melbourne pick-up options and airport pickups.

Allow time for the paperwork and vehicle inspection. Photograph existing marks and confirm fuel and return instructions. If you are arriving after a long-haul flight, allow at least eight hours of rest before starting the road trip. A Melbourne night before the first long drive gives you room to recover.

A DAY IN MELBOURNE

DAY 1

Melbourne

Start with a night in Melbourne before the coastal drive. Walk along the Yarra, visit the city laneways or choose an MCG tour if one is operating on your date. Keep the day light if you have just arrived after a long flight.

You can collect your car today, or start the rental tomorrow if you are staying centrally and using public transport. Match the booked pick-up date to your plans rather than paying for a car you will leave parked.

Stay — A booked hotel or apartment in Melbourne. If you collect the car today, check parking availability and charges before booking.

DRIVE

140 km from Melbourne | **about 2 h** by car | Via **Monash Freeway**

DAY 2

Melbourne to Phillip Island

Drive to Phillip Island and make Cowes your overnight base. Choose a daytime stop such as Churchill Island or a coastal walk, leaving enough time to check into your room before the evening.

If the Penguin Parade is part of your plan, check the official visitor information and tickets (https://www.penguins.org.au) and book ahead. The event is around sunset, so arrange accommodation check-in first and take care on the drive back to Cowes after dark, when wildlife may be on the road.

Stay

Seahorse Motel and Apartments (https://www.visitbasscoast.com.au/seahorse-motel-and-apartments) is an accommodation option in Cowes. Check the room or apartment type, parking and late check-in arrangements if you are visiting the Penguin Parade.

DRIVE

145 km from Phillip Island | **about 2 h 10 min** by car |

Via **Meeniyan - Promontory Road**

DAY 3

Phillip Island to Wilsons Promontory

Continue towards Wilsons Promontory and Tidal River. Choose a walk suited to the weather, daylight and your group's ability, or spend the afternoon around Norman Beach. Check Parks Victoria's current visitor advice (https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/places-to-see/parks/wilsons-promontory-national-park) before entering the park.

Tidal River has cabins and units, so this route can work for a car trip, but secure that accommodation before locking in the rest of your dates. Check availability and minimum stays for your dates. If you stay outside the park instead, revise today's route and the next day's driving time; this map assumes an overnight stop at Tidal River.

Stay

Book built accommodation at Tidal River (https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/places-to-see/parks/wilsons-promontory-national-park/where-to-stay/tidal-river-accommodation), such as a cabin or unit. Choose accommodation with beds and the facilities you need for your group.

DRIVE

290 km from Wilsons Prom | **about 4 h** by car |

Via **South Gippsland Highway**

DAY 4

Wilsons Promontory to Lakes Entrance

Leave Tidal River for Lakes Entrance via the South Gippsland and Princes highways. This is one of the longer drives of the itinerary, so take breaks and keep extra sightseeing stops realistic.

After checking in, take a walk by the water or along the town foreshore. Boat hire, cruises and other lake activities are optional outings with their own booking and weather requirements. Add another night if you want a full day on the Gippsland Lakes rather than fitting it around the drive.

Stay — [The Esplanade Resort](https://esplanaderesort.com.au/) lists hotel rooms and apartments in Lakes Entrance. Check the facilities of your chosen room, parking and arrival time.

DRIVE

200 km from Lakes Entrance | **about 2 h 40 min** by car | Via **Princes Highway**

DAY 5

Lakes Entrance to Mallacoota

Follow the Princes Highway towards Mallacoota, allowing time for the road into town and breaks along the way. Check road and fire conditions before travelling through East Gippsland.

Use the afternoon for a waterside walk or a visit to the Mallacoota Bunker Museum if it is open. Check the museum's current visiting hours before planning around it. Book a motel room for the night and sort out dinner before late arrival, when local choices may be limited.

Stay — [Mallacoota Hotel Motel](https://www.mallacootahotel.com.au/) has motel rooms in Mallacoota. Confirm the room configuration, parking and check-in arrangements.

DRIVE

110 km from Mallacoota | **about 1 h 40 min** by car | Via **Princes Highway**

DAY 6

Mallacoota to Merimbula

Return to the highway and cross into New South Wales, continuing through Pambula to Merimbula. The shorter drive leaves time for a beach or lake walk after you arrive.

Choose any extra attraction around its current opening days rather than assuming it operates daily. Check in before heading back out, and ask about parking and access if your room has particular requirements. Local sightseeing drives are extra to the town-to-town route shown.

Stay — [Sapphire Waters Motor Inn](https://www.sapphirewatersmotorinn.com.au/) offers motel accommodation in Merimbula. Check room facilities and parking directly.

DRIVE

175 km from Merimbula | **about 2 h 30 min** by car | Via **Princes Highway**

DAY 7

Merimbula to Batemans Bay

Continue north along the Princes Highway to Batemans Bay. Break the drive in one of the coastal towns and leave time to explore the Clyde River waterfront after checking in.

If you want a national park walk or a kayaking trip, check current access, conditions and bookings before adding it. Stay on roads your rental agreement permits. A central hotel base gives you the option of walking to dinner without taking the car out again.

Stay

Mariners on the Waterfront (https://www.marinerswaterfront.com.au/) is a hotel option in central Batemans Bay. Check the room type, parking and arrival arrangements.

DRIVE

105 km from Batemans Bay | **about 1 h 40 min** by car

Via **Princes Highway**

DAY 8

Batemans Bay to Jervis Bay

Drive towards the Jervis Bay area. The map reaches Woollamia; the suggested motel is in nearby Huskisson, so allow extra local driving for check-in and sightseeing.

For a visit to Booderee National Park, check the official park information and passes (https://booderee.gov.au) before you go. Choose walks and beach stops around conditions and daylight. Staying in a motel means returning to your booked room for the night rather than relying on a campground inside the park.

Stay

Huskisson Beach Motel (https://www.visitnsw.com/destinations/south-coast/jervis-bay-and-shoalhaven/huskisson/accommodation/huskisson-beach-motel-0) is an option in Huskisson for your Jervis Bay night. Local drives between Woollamia, Huskisson and the national park add to the mapped day.

DRIVE

97 km from Jervis Bay | **about 1 h 30 min** by car | Via **Princes Highway**

DAY 9

Jervis Bay to Wollongong

Head north towards Wollongong, allowing time for a coastal break along the way. Check into your hotel before a foreshore walk and dinner in the city.

If you want to visit Nan Tien Temple, check its current opening days and visitor guidance before making the detour. Keep this day's pace relaxed so you have time for tomorrow's scenic drive into Sydney and the rental return.

Stay

Sage Hotel Wollongong (https://www.nexthotels.com/sage/wollongong/) is an option near the city foreshore. Check parking charges, room type and check-in arrangements.

DRIVE

94 km from Wollongong | **about 1 h 50 min** by car | Via **Princes Highway**

DAY 10

Wollongong to Sydney via Grand Pacific Drive

Take the coastal route towards Stanwell Park, then continue through the Royal National Park towards Sydney as shown on the map. Check road conditions and park access before choosing this route, and allow extra time for lookouts, breaks and any park entry requirements.

The mapped drive ends in Sydney, not at your particular airport or city branch. Leave time for city traffic, refuelling and the car return. Explore the harbour after returning the car, or add a Sydney night if a flight would make this last day rushed.

Returning your car in Sydney

Return to the branch and time on your booking. Check car hire in Sydney for location options, and allow extra time to get from the return branch to your onward transport. Follow the fuel policy on your rental agreement and keep your final fuel receipt.

Allow time for the inspection, take return photos and retain your return receipt. If you are running late, call the branch. After-hours arrangements and late charges differ by company; check them in advance. See returning your car and late and early returns.

Compare Melbourne car hire and select the pick-up and return branches that suit your route. Choose your dates to see the cars and conditions available.

About this car itinerary

If you prefer to travel with your accommodation, see the camper itinerary.

Traditional Custodians

Melbourne: Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin (City of Melbourne (https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-melbourne))
Phillip Island: Bunurong (Bass Coast Shire (https://www.basscoast.vic.gov.au/community-support-services/reconciliation))
Wilsons Promontory: Gunaikurnai, Bunurong and Boonwurrung (Parks Victoria (https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/get-into-nature/conservation-and-science/conserving-our-parks/wilsons-prom-sanctuary))
Lakes Entrance and Mallacoota: Gunaikurnai, Monero and Bidawel people (East Gippsland Shire (https://www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/our-council/councillors))
Merimbula: People of the Yuin nation (Bega Valley Shire (https://www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au/Our-Community/Our-Shire/History-of-the-shire))
Batemans Bay: Walbunja people of the Yuin Nation (Eurobodalla Shire (https://www.esc.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/275708/Annual-Report-2024-25.pdf))
Jervis Bay: Booderee is Aboriginal land, managed with the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community (Booderee National Park (https://booderee.gov.au/))
Wollongong: Aboriginal peoples of Dharawal Country (Wollongong City Council (https://wollongong.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0027/148068/Innovate-Reconciliation-Action-Plan-2026-2028.pdf))
Sydney: Gadigal of the Eora Nation (City of Sydney (https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/guides/organising-welcome-to-country))

Country boundaries are approximate, and some are shared or contested. These names follow local councils and park managers. The AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia (https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia) shows the wider picture.

Pay your respects to the Traditional Custodians of the land on which you are travelling, and to their Elders past, present and emerging. The Australian environment is fragile, so tread lightly: take only photos and leave only footprints.

DriveNow Disclaimer

DriveNow's suggested itineraries help you plan your own trip. Distances and times are from mapped routes and are a guide only. Driving times are mapped car times. Allow extra time for stops, traffic and accommodation access. Road conditions, closures, opening hours and prices change, so check them before you travel. Any reliance on this itinerary is at your own discretion.

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