

Read the following text and match each paragraph with its heading.

## Australia travel tips for first-time visitors

By David Whitley

A. Educational sign-posting	B. The world of "mate"
C. The sporting divide	D. Quality of ingredients
E. The history or culture	F. Climate change
G. Cheap food	H. The nothingness in-between
I. The Sydney Harbour recalibration	J. Bring your own bottle
K. The weather	L. Tipping ambivalence
M. Plug sockets	N. The distances

### **0. I The Sydney Harbour recalibration**

The Sydney Opera House is the international icon. But it's smaller and more beige than most people expect. The Sydney Harbour Bridge, however, is way more impressive than billed. So on balance, the views from Circular Quay are slightly better than expected, but for surprising reasons.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

The classic error first-time visitors make is trying to 'do' Australia in two or three weeks, forgetting that it's a continent as well as a country. It's far better to pick two or three areas to tackle well than attempt to tick off the highlights in one visit. Otherwise, most of the visit is spent in transit.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Not only are the gaps between major cities bigger than they are in Europe or the US – there are generally far fewer small towns between them. This delineation between urban and bush is massively to Australia's credit. Once out of the city, it feels like you're in the wild, rather than getting a short blast of green before the next settlement comes along.

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Another common misconception is that because Australia is in the southern hemisphere, the seasons are reversed from the northern hemisphere. That's true in the south of the country, but definitely not in the north. The best time to visit Sydney may be November to April, but visitors don't realise it's the opposite for the Great Barrier Reef and the Top End – when that's the monumentally soggy and sweaty wet season.

4. \_\_\_\_\_

Even the spots that don't have a massive wow factor tend to be pepped up with a blizzard of explanations about what the trees are, how the ecosystem works and what creatures can be found living there. Australia has a knack for turning moderately pleasant walks (Manly to Wynnum in Brisbane is a classic case in point) into something a little bit more interesting.

5. \_\_\_\_\_

They're not the British ones, as might be expected for historical reasons. But neither are they the American or European ones. Australia gets its own, which are basically the American ones, but drunkenly slouching inwards. You will use them as you will probably want to charge your mobile phone.

**6.** \_\_\_\_\_

Australian food has long shed its British stodge on the other side of the world reputation. This is partly due to a high quality of ingredients. Your average pub or café steak will generally be better than the equivalent elsewhere in the world. Notable exceptions are to be made for cheese, bacon and chocolate here.

**7.** \_\_\_\_\_

Ingredients are only part of the story, though: A willingness to embrace and integrate cuisines from around the world makes a big difference. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the massive plethora of Thai restaurants and take-outs. Most are pleasingly affordable, and it's wonderfully rare to pick a dud.

**8.** \_\_\_\_\_

Not content with getting excited about two sports no-one else cares about, Australia has a strong regional divide over which one is the daddy. There's a teensy bit of crossover, but Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia will generally bombard you with unnerving levels of Aussie Rules coverage. Queensland and New South Wales, meanwhile, attempt to bore all-comers with relentless banging on about rugby league.

**9.** \_\_\_\_\_

Americans, in particular, struggle to grasp the absolutely impeccable Australian system. Basically, you do if you want to, but nobody particularly expects you to or pressures you to. So don't worry if you don't have any loose change.

**10.** \_\_\_\_\_

The most common accusation levelled at Australia – that it has none – is total nonsense. It's just not that well known. Go to virtually any Australian attraction or site concentrating on it, and it'll probably be fascinating. Remarkable stories such as those of the Batavia shipwreck, First Fleet and Burke and Wills expedition are worth looking up as an introduction – and that's before you even start on the aboriginals.