



Meet the
Specialist

**Sarah
Kane**

Southern Solace

Sarah Kane shares her passion for all things Australian

The first time I visited Australia I fell in love with the country. I was on a gap year prior to university, and spent six months on the well-trodden backpacker path. I immediately adored the country, the peoples' attitude and the outdoor lifestyle. As a country there was so much that appealed to me: wide open spaces, superb beaches, fantastic walking and all combined with the cosmopolitan cities of Sydney and Melbourne where fabulous cuisine coupled with world class wine is never far away.

I knew I wanted to spend more time there and after returning on several holidays I finally took the plunge and moved to Sydney. It was whilst working there that I became involved in the travel industry and began sharing my experiences with overseas visitors from an information area located at the Sydney Opera House. The office at Audley is extremely pretty but I have to say it was a real privilege overlooking the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge each day!

Having just returned from my eighth extended trip to the country I think it is safe to say that Australia never fails to impress and the diversity of the scenery, climate and wildlife ensures that every trip offers true variety.

Most recently I was lucky enough to get off the beaten track by heading to North Western Australia and the remarkable Kimberley region. Here I flew by helicopter over the extraordinary sandstone domes of the Bungle Bungle Range in the heart of the Purnululu National Park, enjoyed true outback driving along the Gibb River Road and surprisingly enough sipped champagne at an art gallery opening in the old pearling town of Broome. A stay on a working cattle station in this region epitomised the real Australia for me; stunning outback scenery satisfyingly combined with sophistication.

In this vein, and despite what many think of the typical outback caricature of Australia, sophistication really is everywhere. This can certainly be found in Australia's cultural capital, Melbourne. I personally love the 'vibe' of this city, hidden along little lanes there are fabulous art galleries, amazing coffee shops and wonderful boutique stores. Without doubt Melbourne now rivals Sydney for its award winning restaurants and home grown wines. I believe the reason I keep being drawn 'downunder' is the fantastic contrast between the rugged, outback wilderness and the elegance of the modern city.