

Touring Australia for Folk & Acoustic Artists

A practical guide to festival seasons, live venues, visas, budgeting and building an Australian tour

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Online version at:

Key advice: Build the tour around one or two anchor festivals, then add folk clubs, listening rooms and regional dates around them. For international artists, Woodford is the strongest Christmas/New Year anchor. Most festivals have application closing dates around 9–11 months before the festival, so start planning and preparing applications about a year ahead.

Full Australian festival calendar: [Folk Alliance Australia – Festival Calendar](#)

1. Three potential festival touring periods

2028 date status: Several organisers have not yet formally published their 2028 calendars.

A. Christmas / New Year / January

- 27 Dec 2027–1 Jan 2028 — **Woodford Folk Festival** — Woodford, QLD — Key Christmas/New Year anchor festival. Apply very early. woodfordfolkfestival.com
- 7–9 Jan 2028* — **Cygnnet Folk Festival** — Cygnet, Tasmania — Excellent touring fit after Woodford. cygnetfolkfestival.org
- Before/after Cygnet — **MONA** — Hobart, TAS — Useful add-on gig; MONA presents regular live music and accepts music pitches. — mona.net.au
- 14–16 Jan 2028 — **Illawarra Folk Festival** — Bulli/Wollongong, (South Coast NSW) — Folk, roots, world, Celtic and acoustic. — illawarrafolkfestival.com.au

B. February / March / April

- 25–27 Feb 2028* — **Cobargo Folk Festival** — Far South Coast, NSW — cobargofolkfestival.com
- 10–13 Mar 2028* — **Port Fairy Folk Festival** — Victoria — Major folk/roots festival; Victorian Labour Day long weekend. portfairyfolkfestival.com
- 10–13 March 2028 — **Womadelaide**, Adelaide, South Australia www.womadelaide.com.au
- March 2028 (usually after Port Fairy FF) - **Blue Mountains Music Festival** — Katoomba, NSW — Folk, roots and blues; useful east-coast routing option. — bmff.org.au
- March 2028 — **Yackandandah Folk Festival** — Victoria. — Website: yackfolkfestival.com
- 25–27 March 2028 – (2nd) **Sounds Folk**, (Brisbane Folk Festival), presented by Brisbane Unplugged Gigs (new event) david@goodtunes.com.au

- 13–17 Apr 2028 — **National Folk Festival** — Canberra, ACT — Major national folk gathering; Easter long weekend. folkfestival.org.au
- April 2028 — dates TBC — **Fairbridge Festival** — Western Australia, south of Perth — Consider if a west-coast leg is viable. fairbridgefestival.com.au
- April 2028 - **CresFest** — Creswick, Victoria — Folk and roots festival in regional Victoria; potentially useful for a Victorian touring leg. cresfest.com.au
- Date TBC — **Milton Folk, Jazz & Blues Festival** — NSW South Coast — Useful outlier when building a NSW run. miltonfolkjazzbluesfestival.com
- April 2028 (late) — dates TBC — **St Albans Folk Festival** — Hawkesbury region, NSW — two hours from Sydney, Usually held on the weekend closest to Anzac Day. stalbansfolkfestival.com.au

C. October / November (2027/2028)

- October 2028 — dates TBC — **Kangaroo Valley Folk Festival** — South coast of NSW — kangaroovalleyfolkfestival.com.au
- Late October 2028 — dates TBC — **Dorrigo Folk & Bluegrass Festival** — north coast of NSW — Folk, bluegrass and acoustic. dorrigofolkbluegrass.com.au
- 10–12 Nov 2028 TBC — **Majors Creek Festival** — Majors Creek, NSW — Small folk/roots/bluegrass/Celtic festival near Braidwood/Canberra. majorscreekfestival@gmail.com — Website: majorscreekfestival.org
- 3–5 Nov 2028 — **Maleny Music Festival** — Sunshine Coast Hinterland, QLD — Three days; folk, acoustic and world music. Artistic Director: David De Santi. malenymusicfestival.com

2. Folk clubs, acoustic venues & useful contacts

Venue / organisation	City / region	Contact	Why it matters
The BUg – Brisbane Unplugged Gigs	Brisbane, QLD	www.brisbaneunpluggedgigs.org/EOIPerform/EOIPerform.php David De Santi: david@goodtunes.com.au	Weekly Tuesday acoustic/folk listening-room format. Modest guarantees, attentive audience, useful touring date. Very moderate fees.
Illawarra Folk Club	Wollongong / Illawarra, NSW	info@illawarrafolkclub.org.au bookings@illawarrafolkclub.org.au illawarrafolkclub.org.au	Year-round concerts plus Illawarra Folk Festival and Folk by the Sea.

MONA	Hobart, TAS	music@mona.net.au mona.net.au	Live music most days MONA is open; especially useful around Cygnet.
Petersham Bowling Club	Sydney, NSW	livemusic@thepbc.org.au thepbc.org.au	Well-established independent live-music room. Artists retain 100% of ticket, merchandise and door revenue.
National Folk Festival	Canberra, ACT	info@folkfestival.org.au folkfestival.org.au	Important industry and community hub; useful contact even outside festival dates.
Fairbridge / FolkWorld	WA	hello@folkworld.com.au fairbridgefestival.com.au	Key WA folk network and festival contact.

Booking approach: For each city, try to combine one festival/guaranteed date with one club or listening-room show and one collaborative/local-support show. A local co-bill is often more valuable than a larger venue with no established audience for the visiting artist.

3. The current Australian live-music scene

- Australia has an active folk, roots, singer-songwriter and acoustic circuit, but it is geographically spread out. Distances are large and travel costs can quickly exceed performance fees.
- Many smaller venues work on door deals, ticket splits or modest guarantees rather than substantial fixed fees. A touring artist should not assume that a venue will carry all the marketing risk.
- Connecting with a trusted local artist, presenter, folk club or festival programmer is extremely important. Local partners can provide support acts, mailing lists, social-media reach, local press contacts, audience credibility and practical advice on routing.
- For international artists, the most effective pitch usually includes: a short bio, two strong live videos, streaming links, clear Australian dates, the anchor festivals already confirmed, act size, technical needs and a realistic fee range.
- Ask festivals and clubs whether they can provide a home billet. Billeting can dramatically improve tour economics and is common in the folk community.

4. Indicative touring costs (AUD)

Item	Indicative cost	Planning note
Return airfare –Australia	\$1,500–\$2,500+ per person	Economy guide only; Christmas/New Year can be substantially higher. Book early and check instrument / baggage rules.
Inter-city domestic flight	\$150 to 250 per person, per leg	Useful planning allowance. Baggage and instruments can add significantly.
Car hire	\$50–\$100 per day	Fuel, tolls, one-way fees and insurance can be additional. A vehicle is often essential for regional festivals.
Accommodation	\$150–\$200 per room/night	Can be much higher in Sydney/Melbourne and during festivals. Ask for a billet/home stay whenever possible.
Food / daily expenses	\$60–\$100 per person/day	Festival catering may reduce this on performance days.
Visa	\$535 base application charge as a current guide for subclass 408	Verify exact charge when applying; concessions/exemptions can apply in some sponsored circumstances.

Rule of thumb: A duo is much easier to make financially viable than a 4–5 piece band unless festivals are covering flights, accommodation or significant guarantees. Route geographically and avoid unnecessary interstate backtracking.

5. Folk dance & bush dance opportunities

If you play folk dance music, make this a separate part of your Australian festival pitch. Many folk festivals program bush dances, ceilidhs, balls and participatory dance events as well as concerts. Offering both a concert set and a dance-band option can create extra programming opportunities.

Present yourselves clearly as a dance band: offer live music for bush dances, ceilidhs or folk dances, and state whether you can also provide the dance calling. If you do not have your own caller, offer to work with an Australian caller. A complete music-and-calling package can be particularly useful to festivals and community bush-dance organisers.

Also approach specialist folk-dance and bush-dance organisers, not only concert presenters. In Tasmania, a useful contact is David “Oddsocks” Wanless, a dance caller associated with a range of Tasmanian bands and dance traditions. In Brisbane/Queensland, contact David De Santi at david@goodtunes.com.au. Good Tunes

regularly presents community bush dances with live musicians and callers.

6. Visas for performing in Australia

Important: European citizens should not rely on an eVisitor (subclass 651) for a paid performance tour. Home Affairs states that the eVisitor is not a work visa and cannot be used to perform paid work for an Australian employer or organisation.

The usual visa to investigate for professional performers is the Temporary Activity visa (subclass 408) – Entertainment Activities stream. The Department of Home Affairs specifically directs entertainers to this visa stream. The current subclass 408 base charge is generally around AUD \$535 for the main applicant, but charges change and concessions may apply in limited sponsored circumstances. Always confirm the final amount in the official pricing estimator before lodging.

- [Subclass 408 – Entertainment Activities](#)
- [Visa fees and charges / pricing estimator](#)

- [eVisitor subclass 651 conditions](#)

Practical visa tip: Discuss visa sponsorship/support requirements with the principal Australian festival or presenter before finalising the tour. If the itinerary includes multiple unrelated presenters, confirm that the proposed visa arrangements cover all paid engagements. For anything complex, use a registered Australian migration agent or obtain advice directly from Home Affairs.

7. Before pitching an Australian tour

- Choose one of the three touring windows and identify one anchor festival.
- Apply to festivals well before their closing dates — most close applications around 9–11 months before the festival date.
- Prepare two live-video links and a concise international touring bio.

- Build an Australian routing map before accepting isolated dates.
- Ask every presenter about fee, door split, accommodation/billet, meals, PA and backline.
- Budget baggage/instrument costs separately from the advertised airfare.
- If appropriate, include a separate dance-band offer: music only, or music plus dance calling.
- Confirm the correct work/entertainment visa before any paid performance.
- Find a local co-bill or Australian contact in each major city to help with marketing and socials.
- Join/follow Folk Alliance Australia and use its festival calendar to fill gaps.

Useful starting point: [Folk Alliance Australia Festival Calendar](#)

