Kingston and Arthur’s Vale Historic Area

The place to begin your visit to the Kingston World Heritage site. Kingston and Arthur’s Vale Historic Area is one of 11 historic sites that form the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property. The Australian Convict Sites was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in July 2010. Collectively, the sites are representative of the global phenomenon of the forced migration of convicts.

HISTORY

BEFORE 1788

Polynesian Settlement
Archaeological evidence from Emily Bay indicates that the area was a Polynesian settlement between 1,000 to 650 years ago. The Polynesians left behind obsidian (volcanic glass) from the Kermadec Islands as well as archaeological evidence. This included a Marae (ceremonial site) and evidence of their houses and lives. Banana trees and cabbage plants were also found by the first European settlers.

1788–1814

British Colonial Settlement
An agricultural penal settlement was established using convict labour to ensure occupation for the British. Convicts, the military and free settlers made Norfolk Island their home until the forced relocation of the population to Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania) in 1814.

1814–1855

British Penal Settlement
Norfolk Island was a place of secondary punishment for convicts who reoffended and those convicted of crimes in the colony of New South Wales or other British colonies. Norfolk Island’s isolation made it ideal for the harsh punishments handed down to prisoners. The penal colony closed in 1855.

1856–PRESENT DAY

Pitcairn Settlement
Pitcairn Island families resettled on Norfolk Island, arriving in 1856, learning to farm unfamiliar foods and raise livestock. Families created homes in the abandoned buildings and farms of Kingston and Arthur’s Vale. They established a community in a new place. The historic site is integral to the lives of all Norfolk Islanders.

Heritage

A Landscape of Woven Histories

World Heritage Listing

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The 11 Australian Convict Sites

- Kingston and Arthur’s Vale Historic Area, Norfolk Island
- Old Government House and Domain, New South Wales
- Hyde Park Barracks, New South Wales
- Cockatoo Island Convict Site, New South Wales
- Old Great North Road, New South Wales
- Port Arthur Historic Site, Tasmania
- Cascades Female Factory, Tasmania
- Darlington Probation Station, Tasmania
- Coal Mines Historic Site, Tasmania
- Bridgewater Woodsmen Estates, Tasmania
- Fremantle Prison, Western Australia

Norf’k language

The Norf’k language was added to UNESCO’s world endangered languages list in 2007. Norf’k developed from a mixture of English, Tahitian, and West Indian Creole and was brought to Norfolk Island by the Pitcairn Islanders in 1856. You can try your hand at Norf’k language by reading some of the signs around Kingston and the attractions on this guide.

INFORMATION

Museums

Learn about Norfolk Island

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ACTIVITIES

Things to see and experience

A stroll through Kingston allows visitors to experience the magic of this carefully conserved World Heritage site and walk back in time to discover the layers of unique living cultural landscape.

Historic Architecture Museums

The 1825–1855 penal settlement buildings, roads, bridges and stone masonry dominate the scene and mask the barely visible underlying remains of the earlier 1788–1814 colonial settlement.

Picnic Areas

Visit a picnic or BBQ on site to take advantage of the breathtakingly beautiful scenery.

Emily Bay

Emile Biele
Swim, snorkel, paddle or surf in the clear waters and reefs of Emily and Slaughter Bays.

Pier Precinct

Taut Piya
When in port, watch the unloading of the cargo ship where local workers use fenders and traditional skills to deliver freight of all sorts to and from Kingston Pier, much as it has always been done.

Government House

Governor House

Government House

Government House is one of the earliest and most intact remaining Government House buildings in Australia.

Research

Resources and archives

No. 9 Quality Row (The Research Centre)

Numbaa 9 Nofilliket Roew (A Research Store)

Located at No. 9 Quality Row, Kingston. The house was originally built in 1839 as the residence for the Royal Engineer. Later, in 1856, it became the home of one of the families relocated from Pitcairn Island. The Research Centre is a valuable stop for anyone with an interest in Kingston, its settlements, the buildings, the landscape and people from the past to the present. All visitors, whether professional or just curious, can explore the property and the extensive research resources kept there, including digitised convict records and a comprehensive reference book collection.

Research Centre staff can assist visitors to undertake research requests and genealogy enquiries. Research assistance fees apply. The Research Centre is indicated by a symbol on the map overleaf.

Visitor Guide and Map

For a complete guide to attractions on this guide.

More information

To find out what’s on during your stay, visit kingston.norfolkisland.gov.au

If using the map, try the interactive gateway on the Norfolk Island Museum website (norfolkislandmuseum.com.au) and the Norfolk Island Museum visitor information (kingston.norfolkisland.gov.au) on the map overleaf.