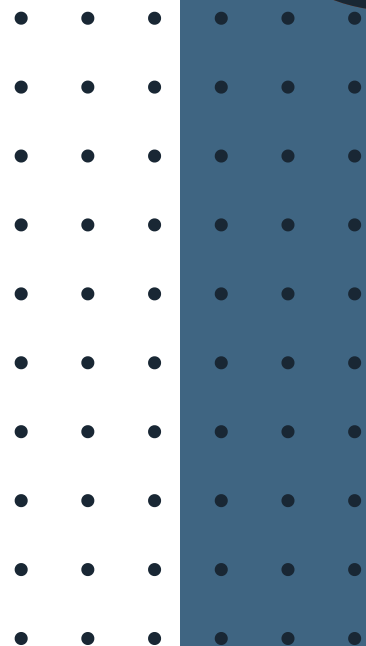




# GUIDE TO KNOW BEFORE HOUSE HUNTING IN SYDNEY

**BY WILLIAMS -**  
The University of Sydney



# Abstract

House hunting in Sydney requires careful planning due to its competitive property market. Start by setting a budget and securing loan pre-approval to determine affordability. Research market trends, compare suburbs, and prioritize factors like transport, amenities, and lifestyle. Attend inspections to assess property conditions and hidden costs. Consider future growth potential and property value before making an offer. Seeking professional advice from real estate agents can provide valuable insights. Be prepared to act quickly in high-demand areas. With thorough research and a strategic approach, you can find a home that suits your needs and budget in Sydney's dynamic market.

## 1. Introduction

House hunting in Sydney can be both exciting and overwhelming, given its dynamic property market and diverse neighborhoods. Whether you're a first-time buyer or an investor, thorough research and preparation are key to making the right decision. Understanding your budget, researching market trends, and prioritizing your needs will help streamline the process. Factors like location, transport, amenities, and future growth potential play a crucial role in property selection. Attending inspections and seeking expert advice can prevent costly mistakes. This guide will provide essential tips to help you navigate Sydney's real estate market and find the perfect home with confidence.

## 2. Does Location Still Matter Most When You're Searching for a New Home?

Does location still matter most? Should you remodel your home to suit your tastes, or for resale value? Are starter homes still a thing? We all have plenty of questions about the ever-changing world of real estate. In our Ask an Agent series, we're partnering with experts at Better Homes & Gardens Real Estate to answer your biggest questions about finding, buying, and selling a home.

Take the first steps in any house shopping journey, and you're bound to hear the phrase "location, location, location." (In fact, if you hear it just once during your house hunt, count yourself lucky.) This oft-repeated saying emphasizes the importance of location when you're searching for your next home, and it's been around for ages. So does it still apply?

In our remote-work world, proximity to the nearest highway into the city or closeness to the office doesn't matter the same way it once did. If you only work from home, you don't need to consider your commute when house hunting; if you only go into the office two or three times a week, you might be more willing to deal with a stressful commute just a few days a week—instead of five—if it means you can live closer to your favorite hiking trail.

Proximity to grocery stores, restaurants, parks, and the other elements that make up a town or community can still make or break your enjoyment of your new home. With all these conflicting forces at play, we have to ask: Does location still need to be at the top of your wishlist?

Ask an Agent: Is Location Still the Most Important Thing to Consider When House Hunting?



Location is so important.

I always tell buyers to look at the three Ls—location, lot size, and layout—because you can't change them. And so when you're looking at big-picture investment, the first one is location. You can never change location.

Is the house on a busy street? Does it back up to a Walmart parking lot? That will never change. Sometimes you even have to look at what's going to happen behind the house. What does the city have planned? That might be a green belt now, but not in the future.

The three Ls are essential. You can go in and change carpet and remodel the kitchen, but you can't choose a lot size. In the layout, you're not going to change the footprint of the house. And you can't change the location. You can't change those basics of the house. That is what it is.

### 3. Sydney Suburb Guide

They call Sydney a city of villages, and it doesn't take long to realise that each pocket of the city has its own distinct vibe. From harbourfront neighbourhoods to sun-drenched beaches and vibrant urban areas, here are some of the city's must-see districts.

#### **Sydney's beaches**

##### **Where: Bondi, Bronte, Coogee and Manly**

Sydney's best-loved beach suburbs aren't just known for their sandy shores and rolling waves— you'll find a whole range of diversions, from stunning coastal walks to some of Sydney's best cafés. Some beaches, like the world-famous Bondi are close to the city centre. Others, like Manly are a little further away, but well worth it for the views during the ferry ride from Circular Quay.

### **Sydney's inner east**

**Where: Surry Hills, Darlinghurst, Paddington, Potts Point and Kings Cross**

Sydney's inner east is brimming with picturesque terraces, tree-lined streets and quirky cafes. Former working class suburbs Darlinghurst and Surry Hills are now a modern playground for urban professionals, while trendy Potts Point is known for its grand mansions and upscale restaurants. In between them all lies Kings Cross, the once-notorious nightlife hub now better known for its trendy wine bars.

### **Central Sydney**

**Where: City centre, The Rocks, Darling Harbour and Barangaroo**

Iconic architecture, big-ticket attractions and superb water views collide in these central harbourfront locales. The Rocks is Sydney's oldest neighbourhood, set within strolling distance of some of the city's biggest attractions. Right next door sits Barangaroo where glass-walled office towers overlook a harbourside park and an inviting selection of restaurants.

### **Sydney's inner west**

**Where: Chippendale, Newtown and Marrickville**

Once a gritty industrial hub, the clutch of suburbs stretching west of Central Station have evolved into one of the city's most lively and liveable precincts, packed with cafés, backstreet bars, breweries, restaurants, and independent boutiques. On the precinct's western fringe, Marrickville has carved out a reputation as the city's hottest (and best value) international dining district.

## **4. House Hunting? 2015 Trends That Will Change The Way You Buy**

The Sydney dream is alive and well—it just looks a little different from decades past.

Much of this, of course, is due to the recent housing market crash.

It was only about five years ago that the subprime mortgage crisis pulled the carpet out from under Sydney's feet—both literally, as many people lost their homes to foreclosure, and proverbially, since the crisis caused property values to plummet within a few short years.

That said, the next generation of would-be homeowners hasn't lost faith: A recent survey by Zillow found that 54% of young adult renters plan to buy a house within the next two years—with 65% saying that owning a home is necessary for achieving "the good life."

But while the values of those polled may be traditional, how they go about buying a home in 2015 and beyond won't be.

Since the recession, the rules of the game have changed, affecting how buyers, sellers and lenders have approached the process, according to Brendon DeSimone, author of "Next Generation Real Estate: New Rules for Smarter Home Buying & Faster Selling."



His big-picture observation? Things are mostly on the up-and-up for house hunters.

A few years ago, when people wondered what they needed to buy a house, the answer usually consisted of perfect credit and a rich relative who could plop down cash for a down payment. But as credit standards loosen and competition dies down, would-be buyers are getting more opportunities now than they have in the past.

To help us better understand how the environment has changed since the housing meltdown, we looked at some of the home-buying realities of years past—and then asked DeSimone for his thoughts on how things have changed and what it really takes to achieve the homeownership dream today.

### **Home-Buying Trend #1: Low Down Payments Are Back**

**That Was Then ...** In the last few years, most borrowers had to put at least 20% down, since mortgage lenders, still reeling from the subprime crisis, were under government pressure to tighten restrictions.

**This Is Now ...** Lenders are now more willing to say yes to single-digit down payments. Case in point: Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the government-sponsored mortgage giants, recently publicized the introduction of a new lending option for first-time homeowners that allows them to put down as little as 3%.

**What DeSimone Says ...** Before 2008, low down-payment loans were easy to get. But when the market crashed, it became hard to get a loan, and lenders were extremely stringent. People were getting rejected at the eleventh hour all the time.

These days, I've been noticing that banks have been advertising a bit more, and people are starting to realize that lenders are back. But many still believe that you need to put at least 20% down, and that's just not the case anymore.

In fact, I just got off the phone with an agent in Tucson who says she's doing a lot of 3% Federal Housing Agency (FHA) loans and 5% conventional loans—and I'm hearing that a lot lately, especially in the middle of the country.

That said, no matter what's available to you, if you have the money, put down more. Back in the day, my parents always said, buy with 20%. And there's something to be said for that—it's always safer to not be so highly leveraged.

### **Home-Buying Trend #2: You're No Longer Shut Out for Less-Than-Perfect Credit**

**That Was Then ...** Without stellar credit, getting a loan was nearly impossible. In fact, in 2011, former Fed Chair Ben Bernanke remarked that the bottom third of people who might have qualified for a prime mortgage prior to the crisis could no longer get one, based on their FICO score.

**This Is Now ...** Lenders are loosening their standards in an effort to boost home ownership across the country. By some estimates, major lenders are lowering their credit score requirements for FHA loans by as much as 60 points, while a November report by Ellie Mae found that about one third of closed loans were given to borrowers with a FICO score below 700.

**What DeSimone Says ...** When the recession happened, the credit market essentially went away, and there were very few lenders willing to take a chance on people with credit scores not in the 900 range.

But even if they aren't advertising it, some banks are starting to do subprime loans again. Recently, I've seen people get loans with credit scores under 700—which hasn't been the case for years.

But despite these more relaxed standards, if you're self-employed, it's still going to be very tough to get a loan. On the other hand, if you have good credit, verifiable income and cash in the bank, chances are good that you're going to get a loan.

In terms of what type of loan to get, rates are expected to go up, so it might be a good idea to lock in a rate now.

Before the recession, many consumers got adjustable-rate mortgages (ARM) because they offered low rates. People took these loans because they were so focused on the monthly payment, but didn't understand what this type of loan meant for them in the long run. The problem is that you can't lock in a rate with an ARM.

So make sure you do your research on the type of loan that makes sense for you—and a lot of that will depend on how long you'll be in the house.

If you plan to live in the home for the next ten or 15 years, then a 30-year fixed mortgage may make sense. But if you're only going to be in your home for five years, then you might get a better rate with a five-year or seven-year ARM.

### **Home-Buying Trend #3: You Can Stop Succumbing to Seller Pressure**

**That Was Then ...** 2012 marked the beginning of the housing recovery, when inventory became tighter and home prices finally began to rebound from the recession. As such, home buyers found themselves caught up again in tooth-and-nail bidding wars—and rarely winning.

**This Is Now ...** Home prices are still ever-so-slightly on the uptick, but at more of a snail's pace. According to an S&P/Case-Shiller report, housing price gains slowed for nine straight months through September.



And since more available homes are expected to come on the market in 2015, it should create a better—and less frantic—environment for buyers.



What DeSimone Says ... We rushed out of the gates about a year and half ago, but the frenzy has slowed down across many markets. For buyers, this means you don't have to be afraid of making a lower offer. It's not going to insult anyone—unless you go really low.

Of course, this depends on the market you're in. On the West Coast, sellers often price things low to get more activity and more offers. But in Sydney, sellers price properties high because they expect someone to come in under the asking price.

In general, you don't see many bids going over asking, so if you like the house and neighborhood, don't be afraid to make a lower offer.

#### **Home-Buying Trend #4: You Can Compete With All-Cash Buyers**

That Was Then ... Speaking of competition, regardless of how creditworthy you were just a few years ago, you couldn't stop all-cash deal makers from swooping in and sweeping sellers off their feet.

In fact, as early as the first quarter of 2014, all-cash deals reached a record high, making up more than 42% of all residential sales.

This Is Now ... A lot can change in the matter of a few months: By late summer, the number of all-cash real estate deals had fallen to less than 38% of home sales, and the number of purchases made by institutional real estate investors—who mostly buy with all cash—had also cooled to its lowest levels since the first quarter of 2012.

What DeSimone Says ... Sellers tend to want to go with all-cash arrangements because they assume they're a done deal. In the seller's mind, they won't have to wait for buyers to get their mortgage approved, and can move forward right away.

But you can circumvent this by getting all of your paperwork together ahead of time—opting to go the full-blown preapproved, not just prequalified, route. And have the bank do a verification of your loan, so all you need to get is a copy of the title report.

Get as much done in advance so that you can tell the buyer, “Look, my loan is ready to go. Accept my offer, and in X amount of time, we’ll have this done.”

Another point worth noting: People assume it will take 30 to 45 days to get a loan processed, and while that may be true in the Northeast, on the West Coast and in the middle of the country, banks are getting loans done in 10 to 14 days now.

Also, in exchange for all cash, sellers usually accept a little less money—around 5%. So be prepared to pay a little bit more than cash buyers to stay competitive.

And don’t underestimate the power of a personal connection. A lot of the time sellers will assume that an all-cash buyer is an investor, and they’d rather sell to a person who will live there. As a broker, if I think my client is up against an investor, I tell the buyer to write a letter to the seller to establish a connection.

### **Home-Buying Trend #5: Buy for the Love of the Home—Not the Return**

That Was Then ... For generations, home buying was typically viewed as the smartest investment you’d ever make because you’d never lose money.

And for more than three decades until 2004, median home prices rose, on average, more than 6% a year, and never declined during that period.

This Is Now ... To say the housing bubble shook up the country’s beliefs about homes as a safe investment haven is an understatement.

Homeowners saw their property values drop by 30% between 2007 and 2009—which may be why 43% of Sydney polled in a recent survey say they no longer view property as one of the best ways to build wealth.

What DeSimone Says ... In the early 2000s, home values increased as much as 20% in less than a year, leaving buyers feeling eager to get in the game and make a quick return on their investment.

But we all know what happened to the inflated real estate market in 2008, which taught us that real estate was never meant to be a place to make a quick buck. It’s a place to live first—and an investment second.

You should want to purchase to plant roots and make memories for the next five to ten years. There are emotional benefits of homeownership that can’t be bought or sold.

## **5. What to do in Sydney this March**

Count frog calls, climb a shell bridge and amp up your nights with live music. Try something new this month with these 15 events.

### **Climb over a giant shell art bridge**

Marvel at the colourful shell patterns of Ngabu while also taking in the view of Sydney Harbour Bridge. This interactive installation was designed by Auntie Lola Ryan who hails from a lineage of esteemed Dharawal shell artists who call La Perouse home.





Throughout March, until Sunday 27 April

### **Step into the neon world of Chinatown**

Captivating neon light installations take over Haymarket for 3 weeks during Neon Playground. Explore neon lights, vibrant art installations, music, food and more.

Saturday 15 March to Sunday 6 April

### **Show us your slice of Australian Life**

Our national photography competition is now open. Whether you're a professional photographer or someone with a keen eye, everyone is welcome to take part. Young photographers aged 5 to 12 are invited to enter Little Sydney Lives.

Entries close 2 April

### **Take your pick from a loaded line-up of live music**

Great Southern Nights brings some of the finest pop, indie and dance acts to Sydney's favourite music venues this month. From SAFIA at City Recital Hall to Bootleg Rascal at the Landsdowne Hotel, there's lots to explore in the full program of free and ticketed gigs.

Friday 21 March to Sunday 6 April

### **Hop to it: help us track local frogs**

Scientists locate and identify frogs by listening to their calls. Join frog expert Dr Arthur White to survey frog habitats in Sydney Park, Kimberley Grove and Lewis Hoad reserves at dusk. Your observations can contribute to important ecological research.

3, 12 and 19 March

### **Get inspired during Climate Action Week**

Hear from leaders and changemakers at more than 230 community-led events across the city during Climate Action Week. You'll find events on all aspects of climate action, from building resilient cities to conserving biodiversity.

Monday 10 to Sunday 16 March

### **Eat, shop and play at Sydney Streets**

Celebrate the neighbourhoods of Glebe, Redfern and Pyrmont as we take over the streets with live music, roving performers, kids activities and alfresco dining.

Saturday 8, 15 and 29 March

### **Reconnect to nature through Aboriginal cultural knowledge**

Join this free series of talks with Gadigal custodian, Elder and cultural educator Uncle Jimmy Smith as he share cultural knowledge about the sky, astronomy, the land and waters.

Wednesdays, 5 to 26 March

### **See the works of British artist and activist Derek Jarman**

He was one of the most influential figures in 20th century Britain and a pioneer in queer cinema. Now UNSW Galleries presents the first exhibition of Derek Jarman's work in Australia, with rarely seen paintings and films by the artist, alongside photography and archival materials. Meanwhile, a retrospective of Jarman's films are screening free at the Art Gallery of NSW cinema.

Throughout March

### **Celebrate getting older during Seniors Festival**

Get active, meet new friends and try something new with events and activities at our community centres and facilities. City of Sydney residents aged 55 and over can enjoy free entry to our pools and fitness centres.

Monday 3 to Sunday 16 March

### **Grow your organic gardening skills**

Join composting coach Compostable Kate at Sydney City Farm for a free composting and worm farming workshop. Reduce your food waste and make great soil conditioner for super healthy plants.

Saturday 8 March

### **Sing with Barayagal choir**

Join Barayagal choir for a special performance. and raise your voice in a 40-minute workshop where you'll learn to sing a song together as a group. Barayagal is a community choir open to everyone to learn about First Nations cultures, stories and songs.

Thursday 20 March



### **Mark Transgender Day of Visibility**

Hear personal stories of living, loving and working in the local community from proud transgender people at Inner City Legal Centre. You can make a splash at Cook+Phillip Park Pool for an evening of relaxation, swimming, sport and fun for trans and gender diverse communities.

Wednesday 26 March and Sunday 30 March

### **Hear about Australia's first female mayor**

On International Women's Day, City historian Laila Ellmoos uncovers the life and work of Lilian Fowler, who was elected NSW's first female alderman for Newtown Council in 1928 before becoming Australia's first female mayor 10 years later.

Wednesday 5 March

### **Share the pleasure of poetry with Oormila Prahlad**

Hear from acclaimed artist and Pushcart Prize-nominated poet Oormila Prahlad. She'll read personal pieces and join fellow poet Danny Gardner in conversation as they delve into Oormila's creative journey.

Tuesday 11 March

### **Reflect on Earth Hour with Powerhouse**

Hear from the museum's knowledgeable volunteers as they trace the impact of the industrial revolution and innovations leading us to a greener future, while highlighting objects from the Powerhouse collection.

Thursday 13 and 27 March

## 6. How to Hire a Move-Out Cleaning Service in Sydney

Moving out of a rental property always comes with a ton of physical and mental pressure. Tenants feel the added stress of returning the property to its pristine condition to avoid last-minute disputes or bond deductions.

However, in the midst of planning and preparations, it is often to feel overwhelmed when it comes to sprucing up the premises from scratch. That's where a professional end of lease cleaning Sydney comes in. Highly trained, seasoned and enthusiastic experts follow a pre-approved cleaning checklist to transform a dirty property into a spotless glory using advanced tools and equipment.

They can save you time and energy and alleviate stress while helping you secure full bond money. Here is a complete guide on hiring Sydney's best and most reliable move-out cleaning service. Ensure you assess the specific cleaning requirements and set your estimated budget to enjoy a quality, pristine, hassle-free cleaning service.

Let's Get Started!

### 1. Know Your Lease and Specific Cleaning Needs

Tenants often lose their hard-earned deposited security due to half-baked cleaning. Thus, it is important to understand your cleaning requirements, such as attention-to-detail kitchen cleaning, vacuuming or deep cleaning of carpets, and scrubbing of walls and bathroom fixtures. Etc.

You should check your tenancy agreement for cleaning expectations and refer to the property condition report when pre-inspecting your rental property. This will help you know the areas that need special attention for a hassle-free rental inspection. You can also include additional services as per your requirement and create a customised move-out cleaning package.

### 2. Research the Company: Ask For Recommendations & Referrals

Genuine recommendations and referrals can do wonders in choosing the right and most sought-after company in your local area. Ask your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours who have recently opted for a cheap end of lease cleaning Sydney service in the area. They can suggest good recommendations that give you peace of mind.

You can also search for the right company online. Make sure you do proper research or check their official website to make a well-informed decision. You can also register a complaint against a fraud company. However, ensure you understand the potential red flags when doing online research.

### 3. Consider Customer Reviews

Customer reviews are crucial when hiring a professional move-out cleaning service for your rental property. They provide genuine insights into professionalism, service quality and reliability. Customer reviews help you know trustworthy companies to ensure value for money and prevent scams and other issues. This can help you discover whether they clean neglected areas, come on time or listen to the specific requests- giving you peace of mind.





#### **4. Compare the Cleaning Quotes**

Although the topmost priority is to conduct a quality cleaning, make sure you compare the final quotation to choose the best service within your budget. You can gather estimates from at least four to five service providers and compare their pricing. However, avoid falling for too-low quotations, as these companies may ask you for hidden fees during the process.

When comparing quotes, ensure you check the pricing policy, cancellation fees, and additional services for clarity. Choose a company that offers a transparent pricing policy with no hidden charges.

#### **5. Verify Licenses and Other Credentials**

This is an imperative step when hiring the best move-out cleaning service in Sydney. Make sure the company you shortlisted is licensed and offers liability insurance to cover damages.

You can verify their ABN (Australian Business Number) on the Australian Business Register website. Also, ensure the company adheres to local regulations and possesses the necessary certifications. You can also ask the company to show their professional credentials before you make the final decision.

#### **6. Consider the Inclusions and Exclusions**

Confirm what is included in the final package when booking a move-out cleaning. An experienced company complies with a pre-approved cleaning checklist which includes:

- Ceiling fans, walls, shelves and cabinets
- Windows Inside and outside (if accessible)
- Carpet vacuuming
- Floor sweeping and mopping
- Kitchen cleaning: This includes range hood, appliances, stovetops, marble countertops, sink, faucets, garbage disposal, and nooks and crannies

- Bathroom Cleaning: Professional covers all fixtures and fittings to remove soap scum, hard water stains and bad odours.
- Outdoor Cleaning: Cleaning walls and floors of garage and patio cleaning

Apart from this, know the exclusions to make a fair decision. Companies usually don't deep clean carpets and upholstery furniture, tackle mould and mildew, etc. This means you need to include additional services (if required) separately for spotless results.

### **7. Check For a Bond-Return Guarantee**

It is always good to choose a service that comes with a bond-back guarantee. This way, tenants can rest assured that they will keep your rental property in a top shape and pass the rental inspection without any dispute. Some companies even offer a free re-clean service if the property manager or landlord is unhappy with the condition.

However, it should meet the company's terms and conditions. That's why it is important to ask relevant questions and clear all doubts before hiring a move-out cleaning service in Sydney.

### **8. Schedule the Service in Advance**

Did you know that a professional end of lease cleaning Sydney get booked quickly during peak season? Instead of procrastinating, book the best service in advance- at least 4-6 weeks before the final inspection date. Opt for a solution with flexible hours to fit your timeline. This will also save you money and give you peace of mind.

These are some of the ways to help you hire the most reliable and quality move-out cleaning service in Sydney. Make sure you do in-depth research, look for trusted resources and make an informed decision for the sake of your hard-earned bond money.

## **7. Conclusion**

Finding the right home in Sydney requires careful planning, research, and patience. By understanding your budget, exploring different suburbs, and prioritizing key factors, you can make an informed decision. Thorough property inspections and expert advice will help you avoid potential pitfalls. Sydney's competitive market demands quick action, but balancing speed with due diligence is essential. Whether you're buying your first home or investing, staying informed about market trends and future growth potential is crucial. With the right approach, you can secure a home that meets your needs and lifestyle, ensuring a successful and rewarding house-hunting experience in Sydney.

## **8. References**

By Lauren Phillips (June 27, 2024) | Does Location Still Matter Most When You're Searching for a New Home? | bhg. Retrieved 11 March 2025, from

<https://www.bhg.com/does-location-still-matter-most-in-house-hunt-ask-an-agent-8670859>

By Ute Junker and Carly Spek (June 27, 2024) | Sydney Suburb Guide | australia. Retrieved 11 March 2025, from

<https://www.australia.com/en-in/places/sydney-and-surrounds/suburb-guide.html>



By LearnVest (Jan 02, 2015) | House Hunting? 2015 Trends That Will Change The Way You Buy | forbes. Retrieved 11 March 2025, from

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/learnvest/2015/01/02/house-hunting-2015-trends-that-will-change-the-way-you-buy/>

(25 February 2025) | What to do in Sydney this March | cityofsydney.nsw.gov. Retrieved 11 March 2025, from

<https://news.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/articles/what-to-do-in-sydney-this-march>

By Kate Windle (19 Nov 2024) | How to Hire a Move-Out Cleaning Service in Sydney | bondcleaningsydney. Retrieved 11 March 2025, from

<https://www.bondcleaning.sydney/move-out-cleaning-service-in-sydney/>