

# Little Italy in Sydney: Experience Italian Architecture

Many large cities of the world have an Italian quarter and Sydney, Australia, is no exception. The suburb called Leichhardt is known as Little Italy, and its main high street is Norton Street. The street was named after James Norton, a Sydney attorney, who purchased a large estate in the area in 1834. It was here that Italian working class immigrants settled and eventually set up businesses so that now it is the main commercial center of the suburb.



The Italian flavor of the street remains strong. Here you can find everything Italy is famous for, from authentic pizza to fashion and leather goods. Norton Street has the oldest cafe in the area, Cafe Sport, where you can hear people speaking Italian and see the results of Italian football matches chalked up on a board while you sip your authentic cappuccino. The area is full of places to enjoy typical Italian cuisine, such as seafood, gelati, pasta and pastries.

The Leichhardt Hotel, once a car tire outlet, has been transformed with art deco decor, an open-air piazza and gallery for drinks in the cocktail bar or dining in style, inside or out. There is also the Palace Cinema, one of the most luxurious movie theaters in Sydney with eight auditoria showing the latest releases.

At 23 Norton Street, the south end, is the Italian Forum. In this charming area you will find Tuscan-style architecture around a piazza, with a marble fountain bearing a statue of Dante. Here are many fashionable stores and cafés as well as an amphitheater with seating for cultural events, such as folk dancing displays. It is an atmospheric haven both by day and night, and at weekends extra entertainment such as itinerant musicians is laid on.

Next door to the Italian Piazza is the Italian Forum Cultural Centre. This is a lively focus for all aspects of Italian culture: theatrical performances, language courses for both children and adults, fund-raising events and competitions. The public library is also situated in the Forum area.

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Once a year, up to a hundred thousand visitors cram into the Little Italy for the annual Italian Festa. This

is one of the biggest street festivals in Australia, and last year it was held at the end of October. Norton Street and the surrounding area is closed to traffic, and turned into an enormous European-style market, with stalls selling organic food, crafts, gifts and Italian delicacies. There are dance competitions, fashion parades and cookery demonstrations, both by the local nonnas and famous chefs. Live entertainment abounds in this Latin-style carnival, including plenty of activities for the kids such as bouncy castles, face painting and puppet shows. A special feature of the festival is the Italian Affair to Remember, where a couple styled Romeo and Juliet make their vows in a romantically decorated setting.

If you have an appetite for all things Italian you will be more than satisfied in Norton Street and the surrounding area, even though it is so very far away from the country itself.

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