

Geography

Australia is situated between the Pacific and the Indian Oceans in the southern hemisphere.

Australia is the **smallest continent** in the world and is mostly flat, except for **Great Dividing Range**.

There are mostly **plains** in Australia and a great part of the surface is **desert** – the **Great Sandy Desert** and the **Great Victoria Desert**.

Australia has the **Australian Alps** and the **Great Dividing Range** on the eastern coast.

The highest peak is **Mt. Kosciuszko**.

Major rivers are the **Murray** and the **Darling**.

The **largest piece of rock** in the world is **Ayers Rock** (or **Uluru**).

The name comes from Latin **Terra Australis** = **southern land** as people called it in the past.

Australia has more than **2 000 national parks** and nature reserves that range from desert landscape to high mountains to coastal **dunes** and rainforests.

Climate

Australian seasons are the opposite of the northern hemisphere. Summer starts in December, autumn in March, winter in June and spring in September. In Australia, there is a huge central desert surrounded by a semi-desert zone, tropical zone with heavy summer rainfalls in the north and in the south and southwest, the summers are hot and dry and winters are mild.

History

The island was discovered by Captain James Cook in 1770. He landed in today's Sydney and explored the eastern coast. The Dutch seaman **Abel Tasman** discovered Tasmania. The first European settlers were mostly convicts.

Flag

The Australian flag consists of a small Union Jack in the top left corner on a blue background and the Southern Cross constellation. There is a seven-pointed star, the Commonwealth star represents the six states and one point is for the territories.

The Australian **currency** is **Australian dollar**.

Official language is **English**.

Examples of Australian English

Australian English uses a lot of shortenings, e. g. **Oz** for Australia, **Aussie** for Australian, **Poms** for Englishmen, **roo** for a kangaroo.

Typical animals and plants

Australia has a lot of unique animals like **kangaroo, koala, emu, echidna, cockatoo, wombat, platypus, and dingo**. Typical plants of this country include **eucalyptus** and the national flower is **wattle**.

Original inhabitants

The original inhabitants are the **Aborigines**. They arrived **from Asia** about 40 000 years ago when Australia wasn't a separate island. They used **boomerangs** for hunting. Now they live in **reserves**.

Population

There are about **18** million inhabitants in the country. The majority is of **British origin** and most of them live on the **eastern coast**. There are mostly almost uninhabited areas - "**outback**".

There are big **distances** between farms so they mostly communicate through **radio**. A **helicopter** is an important means of transport there and because of them there are "**flying doctors**".

Sport

The Australians like playing **rugby, Australian football and cricket**.

Political system

Australia is a member of the **British Commonwealth of Nations**. It is a **dominion** with **the Queen** as the head of the country. Its official name is the Commonwealth of Australia.

The Queen of the United Kingdom is also the **queen** of Australia but in practise the **Governor General** performs all functions in the Queen's absence.

This country is divided into **six states** and **two territories**.

Cities

The **capital** city is **Canberra** (of aboriginal origin - it means "meeting place").

The **largest** and the **oldest city** is **Sydney** with typical sites - the **Harbour Bridge** and **Opera House** (it looks like sailing boats / waves breaking on the shore). It has nearly 60 kilometres of beaches with the perfect Mediterranean-like climate.

The **largest cities** are **Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth** and **Adelaide**.

Melbourne is the **second largest city** and **financial and commercial centre** and also **the centre of Australian football, cricket, horse racing, tennis and golf**. There are many parks and gardens (The Royal Botanic Garden).

Economy

Australia exports **coal, wheat** and **petroleum products**. **Coal, oil, natural gas, iron ore, gold, lead, zinc** are mined in Australia.

Agriculture

The principal crops grown in Australia are **wheat** and **barley**.

Australian farmers raise **sheep** and **cattle**. Australian sheep comprise one quarter of all wool in the world.

Export products of Australian agriculture are **milk, wool, eucalyptus** and **pine timber**.

Places of interests

Tasmania

Tasmania is an island state off the south eastern coast of Australia. The island is sometimes called “the apple isle”. More than one fifth of Tasmania is covered by national parks. It is home to a rare animal – Tasmanian devil. The animal was named by European settlers because they were terrified by its shrieking and groaning sound.

Kangaroo Island

Australian wildlife is preserved there because rabbits, foxes and other European animals were never introduced onto the island unlike the Australian mainland.

Kakadu National Park

Visitors can see Aboriginal rock paintings, crocodiles, water birds or cockatoo there.

Ayers Rock

Ayers Rock is a huge sandstone in Uluru National Park.

Great Barrier Reef

Great Barrier Reef is the world’s longest coral reef where people can dive and see tropical fishes and rich marine life.

Rabbit, deer, pig, rat, fox, ferret (fretka), buffalo, cat, cattle or horse were brought onto Australian island. (Also some kinds of crops and opuntia were brought there.)

Famous Australian people are Mel Gibson, Nicole Kidman, Paul Hogan, Kylie Minogue, the famous band is ACDC. Steve Irwin - "The Crocodile Hunter" was an Australian wildlife expert, television personality and conservationist.

I have never been to Australia / I was in Australia years ago.

I saw.....

I would like to see

TEST

landscape

major

in the past

desert

flat

the highest peak

rock

coral reef

rare animals

island

natural gas

coast

flag

mainland

cattle

coal

reserve

southern hemisphere

sandstone

wool

outback

original inhabitants

horse racing

settler