

# Australia

Australia, in geological terms, is the world's oldest land mass, the largest island and the smallest continent. It is a diverse continent containing rain-forests, rich alluvial soils, snowfields, irrigated farm lands, huge expanses of cattle and sheep grazing country and very large dry to desert regions. The name "Australia" was first used by Governor Lachlan Macquarie after 1817, but this was after Matthew Flinders had used Australia to name "The Great Australian Bight".

Australia was first settled by its aborigines, who migrated from Asia between 40,000 and 70,000 years ago. When Europeans arrived in Australia in 1788 it is estimated that the aboriginal population was approximately 300,000. The population decreased markedly, mainly due to the onset of, and exposure to, European illnesses.

The penal colonies established by England suffered great difficulties in their early stages, but by the early 1800's began to establish and clear large tracts of land for farming sheep and cattle. In the 1850's gold became a much sought after mineral. Migration increased in search of wealth and trades and service industries blossomed to serve the gold miners. Since those times too, exports of minerals have been of great benefit to Australia's development.

The "Westminster" system of government was an integral part of the development and in 1901, Federation, was accepted as the unification of the six States and two Territories of Australia. Australia is a constitutional monarchy with three levels of government.

Australia has traditionally relied on primary production and the export of minerals (coal and iron ore) but the problems for each of these seem to have been compounded, by the cost of production and the distance to a strong market. (from major markets in Asia, the Americas and Europe.)

The bulk of our continent is very dry with two thirds of our land mass enjoying annual rainfall of less than 400mm (16 inches) per year. Although there are extensive snow fields in our southern mountains, snow seldom falls on any major mainland city.

Australia has a population of 22 million, 70% of which live near the coast. It is a multi-cultural society and has over 6 million citizens who were born in countries other than Australia. Australia's lifestyle, food and recreation have been influenced by immigration.

Australia has a fascination with sport, particularly with water sports. The golden sand beaches that are found in every state of Australia are magnet-like in their attraction. Over the last few years it has been necessary to reduce the effect of the sun by using suitable clothing and sunscreen protection. Rugby, Rugby League, Soccer, Australian Football, Cricket, Surfing, Basketball, Baseball and Tennis are popular sports together with "newer" sports, such as Triathlons.



## Australian Facts

- Australia has 3 time zones – Eastern, Central (-0.5hour) and Western (-2 hours). However in summer, daylight saving time applies in some states so that there are now 5 time zones. Queensland does not observe daylight saving; New South Wales does. As you will be travelling through both Queensland and New South Wales, you should be aware of the differences referred to locally as “Queensland” and “New South Wales” time. Daylight saving operates from October to April
- The world’s largest cattle property (farm) “Strangeray Springs” in South Australia is almost the same size as Belgium, covering 30,028.3 square kilometers.
- Of all the coloured peoples, Australian Aboriginals are ethnologically most similar to Caucasians.
- Australians can trace their ancestry to any one, or a mixture of, more than 60 nations. The average size of an Australian household is 2.66 persons
- Australia is the largest inhabited island, smallest continent, the largest continent occupied by one nation and the least populated.
- Australia is the only English speaking nation where voting is compulsory in federal and state elections. South Australia was the first location where women were granted political equality (1894) and in 1902 all Australian women won the right to vote.
- Independent since 26.01.1901. The secret ballot originated in Victoria in 1856.
- The world’s largest electorate (2.255.278 square kilometers) is situated in Western Australia.
- The Great Barrier Reef is the longest coral reef in the world extending over 2000 kilometers.
- Snakes have caused more deaths in Australia than anywhere else.
- No part of Australia is more than 1000 kilometers from the sea. 50% of the continent has less than 300 mm annual rainfall.
- The first point in Australia touched by the sun is Mount Warning near Murwillumbah and the most easterly land is Cape Byron, both in District 9640.
- Located in the South Western part of the Oceania
- Climate varies from arid to wet and from moderate to (Sub) Tropical (cool temperate to tropical)
- Capital – Canberra
- Population - 22,700,000 with over 6 million (27%) born outside Australia
- Tourism 5 million
- Agricultural products – Sheep, Cattle, Timber, Wheat, Barley, Maize, Fruit, Sugar, Meat, Livestock – Sheep 120 million, Poultry 70 million, Cattle 26 million, Pigs 2.6 million, Goats 200 000, Horses 200 000